
The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

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The jupon of Edward, The Black Prince c1370 (viewed from the back)
Reproduced courtesy of the Chapter, Canterbury Cathedral
and Sarah Stephens Photography

Editorial

Welcome to the winter edition of the newsletter. The first piece of news I wish to share is that Karen Finch, textile conservator and a founder member of Medats, sadly died earlier this year. An appreciation will be published in the next issue.

This newsletter contains abstracts from the September study day *Learning Through Reconstruction*. The subject matter of the study day proved very popular and over 70 tickets sold. The event was enormously enjoyable, with fantastic information shared by the speakers, and a great atmosphere. Another study day, again with a focus on reconstruction, is planned for September 2019, date to be confirmed.

The venue for Medats events has once again been the subject of much discussion among the members of the committee. Although St. Stephens Church Hall has met with approval from most members it does have its issues. The hall is geared to be a kindergarten so all the tables and chairs have to be set out by committee members (and any other kind volunteers who arrive early), and then put away again at the end of the day. There is no catering or provision of crockery, cutlery etc., so everything has to be brought in. There are no Power Point facilities which have to be hired each time. The disabled access is possible but not easy or welcoming. We would very much like to improve on this, but it is a challenge to find anywhere reasonably priced in central London. We are, however, following several promising leads and hope to be able make an announcement in the next newsletter. In the meantime the 2019 conference will again be held at St. Stephens.

Details of our study day looking at early church textiles can be found on page 9. Norfolk Museums Service holds an excellent textiles collection and the day, which is spread across three closely located sites, promises to be very stimulating. This issue also contains an exhibition review by Rosalia Bonito Fanelli, illustrated with some lovely photographs, of the Islamic Art & Florence exhibition held at the Uffizi and Bargello museum.

As ever any contributions to the next newsletter in the form of research projects, exhibition or book reviews, photographs or reports on museum visits will be gratefully received.

Ninya Mikhaila

To receive the newsletter as a colour PDF file electronically, please e-mail newsletter@medats.org.uk

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The Bircham cope (detail) NWHCM 1939.75
c.1480, from Great Bircham, Norfolk;
made into an altar cloth at a later date.

Red velvet with gold, green, yellow and white stitching. In the centre the Virgin is borne up by angels and flanked by seraphi. Other decorative devices include foliage, fleurs-de-lis, rayed suns and double-headed birds. Motifs embroidered on linen and applied to the velvet. Just one example of the early church textiles in the collection of Norfolk Museums Service.

Learning from Reconstruction

Abstracts from the study day on Saturday 22 September 2018
St Stephen's Church Hall, Gloucester Road, London



Cynthia Jackson

The Broderers' Crown: Investigating the art of the sixteenth-century professional embroiderer

The subject of this presentation was a rare extant example of professional embroidery, in use from the latter half of the 16th century. It is a unique ceremonial artefact, one of two embroidered garlands splendid enough to be used the annual election of the wardens of the Broderers' Company. The garland or 'crown' is a circular band of silk velvet embellished with an array of individually stitched fruit and flower motifs and the dove crest from the Broderers' arms. It is in extremely fragile condition, the silk has faded and the metal threads have tarnished to black. Nevertheless, in design, technique and materials this crown illustrates the breath-taking skill of sixteenth-century professional embroiderers. Although several elements are missing, over seventy intricately stitched motifs remain. Each is unique, embroidered individually in layers of complex and challenging embroidery techniques employing a variety of silver gilt wire and silk threads. Reproducing the crown offered insight into the working methods of the professional and provided an accessible illustration of this extraordinary example of the highly valued and significant sixteenth-century art of embroidery.

www.gutterlaneembroidery.com



Amica Sundström and Maria Neijman

Textile reproduction as a method for in-depth understanding of Swedish medieval gilt leather coverlets

A group of medieval textiles known as gilt leather coverlets have been preserved in Swedish rural churches. The speakers have been engaged since 2015 in a reproduction project aimed at testing hypotheses about manufacture. They have, for example, examined pattern shapes, how to transfer a pattern to fabric, cutting techniques and what thread to use. In addition, this has created an understanding of pattern effects, and how choice of colour and material affect the appearance of the finished item. It has become clear what was worked most carefully, and what mattered less for the appearance. Issues such as reuse of textiles, sewing techniques and whether the originals were created by several different individuals have also been considered.

www.historicaltextiles.org

Christine Carnie

Behind the Bow – recreating a 16th century archer on the Mary Rose

The Mary Rose, flagship of Henry VIII's fleet, was sunk in The Solent 1545, with the loss of hundreds of men. She was raised in 1982 and the preservation of the ship itself and artefacts from her have proved landmarks in maritime and social history studies. This paper considered how the study of some of the extant textile pieces on the Mary Rose, and the images of the period, led to the reconstruction of an outfit for a 1545 archer. It took into account the rather extreme upper body movement specific to shooting the heavy bows found on the Mary Rose, which garments need to accommodate. The speaker carried out a joint research project with members of the English Warbow Society. www.thesempster.co.uk



Alice Gordon

The Art of Seamstress: The Beauty of Plain Sewing

White Rabbit Lynens is Alice's company, specialising in the reproduction of historical linen garments. Alice undertakes commissions from re-enactors, museums, theatre and film designers. In her talk, Alice discussed several projects that she has undertaken and what it means to be a modern historical seamstress. Plain sewing techniques ranging from the fourteenth to the early seventeenth centuries were described, as well as the necessity of having to make certain compromises today in order to fulfil a brief. As part of the talk there were examples of ruffs, bands and shirts to handle and look at as well as antique Victorian linen garments that beautifully demonstrated all of the techniques discussed. www.white-rabbit-lynens.co.uk





Ninya Mikhaila

A Stitch in Time: Reconstructing the jupon of the Black Prince

This presentation offered insights into the process of researching and reconstructing the quilted, and heavily embroidered, defensive garment worn by Edward, The Black Prince in the late fourteenth century. The original jupon was displayed over the Prince's tomb in Canterbury Cathedral for more than 600 years and is now faded, fragile and somewhat altered from its original state. The current condition of the extant garment made creating a faithful replica impossible. However, by cross referencing material from other extant examples, as well as drawing from visual and documentary sources of the period, and by learning from experimental archaeology, a real and tangible impression of the splendour of the Royal garment could be achieved.

www.ninyamikhaila.com



Dan Rosen

Old England Grown New: Dressing for Success in a Strange Land

Facing extreme weather in an unfamiliar environment, settlers bound for Virginia turned to published provision lists for clues on how to survive in a strange, new land. Based on the experiences of earlier mariners and merchants, visitors and voyagers, these lists of suggested supplies often included garments and accessories specifically chosen to protect them from threats to body as well as identity. Working from recommendations and reflections in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century adventurers' own words, Dan has reconstructed what one of these suggested seasonally-adapted wardrobes might have looked like. He shared what he has learned during this process and discussed how the Early Modern English settler probably did (or perhaps did not) cope with and adapt to their new world.

www.oldenglandgrownnew.weebly.com

Islamic art and Florence from the Medici to to the 20th century

An exhibition review and comment by Rosalia Bonito Fanelli

Islam e Firenze. Arte e Collezionismo dai Medici al Novecento was a major three month exhibition in Florence running from 22 June to 29 September 2018. It was located at two venues: The Uffizi Gallery and The Bargello Museum. Giovanni Curatola, the distinguished specialist in oriental carpets and decorative arts, supervised two groups of experts and edited the 352 page catalogue, details of which are at the end of this article.

The Uffizi Exhibition

Florence had important commercial contacts with the Islamic world since the Middle Ages. The precious carpets, textiles, vestments, illuminated manuscripts and other rare decorative-arts objects presented here highlight the period from the Medici family's control over Florence to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. The exhibited historic gold-brocaded silk velvets and gold-threaded embroideries were restored and displayed under proper environmental conditions. Exceptional carpets came on temporary loan from international museums, dealers and private collections.

The Bargello Exhibition: Islamic Textiles and Collectionism

The installation (the last being 35 years ago) places the newly restored objects in climate and light-controlled display cases. The museum director Paola D'Agostino's main idea was to show that late nineteenth century Florence had a cosmopolitan culture. The Bargello National Museum of Decorative Arts was officially inaugurated in 1865 coinciding with the 600th anniversary of the national poet Dante's birth. The medieval building originally served as a dreaded death prison. So actually the nineteenth century museum transformation projected a totally different romantic illusion. Salvaged authentic fragments were interspersed with new Revival replicas.

Nineteenth century international collectionism and Florence European culture sought to retrieve its past through the neo-Gothic, neo-Renaissance and neo-Baroque styles. Concomitantly a quest for the exotic, the mysterious East, produced another style, "Orientalism". The ravages of wars and revolutions, the renovation of historic centres, the changing taste for the "modern" style and the diminishing wealth of the old aristocracy showed their effects all over Europe, but particularly in Florence.

When Florence was designated the capital of Italy (1865-1870), a new administrative bureaucracy and wealthy foreigners arrived on the scene. "Old" buildings were torn down and interior furnishings thrown away to make way for the new. Antique dealers and intermediaries thrived in this situation, the principal ones in Florence were Stefano Bardini and Elia Volpi. They created a "dream-world aura" around the antiques sold in their medieval-styled showrooms or in international auctions. New-wealth collectors, astute investors and a circuit of international museums bought these spoils. The Bargello benefited from the collections of Louis Carrand and Giulio Franchetti.



Arabesque-patterned gold and silver brocaded silk velvet, mid-16th century, 109x59 cm.; Uffizi Gallery Exhibition cat. n.19 (Florence, Bargello Museum, n. 2402C); detail



The Bargello Museum's new wall display case with Islamic textiles and artefacts (photo detail from *Hali* magazine on-line press report)

Louis Carrand, a Lyonese antiquarian-merchant, left France in 1881 for political reasons and afterwards settled in Florence. After his death his immense collection of over 3,300 objects was donated “to Italy and not to Liberal France” as stated in his 1889 bequest. Textiles were just a part of his wide-ranging collection.

Textiles were in the blood of the industrialist Baron Giulio Franchetti. His family descended from Jewish textile merchants trading in eighteenth century Tunisia. With his 1907 donation Baron Franchetti stated that these textiles were to stimulate creativity in artists, craftsmen, art-lovers and students. He helped form a committee to fund a Decorative Arts Training School in Florence. The example was the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Arts and Crafts Schools.

Franchetti’s niece was Florentine-born Isabella Errera. Living in Brussels after marriage she deposited her textile collection at the Royal Museum of Art and History “Cinquantenaire” where she became one of the first women textile-curators ever. Errera methodically included her acquisition sources: “Collection d’anciennes étoffes réunies et décrits, catalogue par Madame Isabelle Errera” (1901). This catalogue also provides information about Giulio Franchetti’s collection. Oftentimes she and her uncle possessed parts of the same object, bought from the same dealer.

The exhibition Catalogue contains an essay by Elisa Gagliardi Mongilli. The Islamic textile historian supervised the textile group for the Bargello. Her previous textile experience comes from cataloguing and curating exhibitions in various museums and private collections both in Asia and in Europe. Her twenty-two page essay *Firenze e I Tessuti Islamici* saliently points out that not all Islamic textiles dealt with religious issues; rather, the subject matter could vary. Literary themes and the portrayal of human figures, such as the story of Layla and Majnun (right) were also portrayed. She discusses the textiles according to historic events, literary allusions, pattern development, and techniques.

Cross-referencing the two exhibition sections I found a similarity between a gold and silver brocaded velvet panel in the Uffizi, cat. n.89 (Bursa, Turkey, Ottoman Dynasty, late sixteenth, early seventeenth century) and the textile of the Ottoman kaftan worn by the Austrian ambassador, Sigismund von Herberstein (fig. 19) in the essay. Elisa Gagliardi Mongilli used this image to make an important observation on the distinction between the sixteenth century European gentleman’s attire, with exaggerated shoulders and slender legs, and that of Ottoman imperial dignitaries, with ample, figure-covering robes and large turbans.



Above: *Layla visits Majnun in the desert*, The lady and the crazed poet, from the *Khamse*, a 12th century Persian poem by Nizami; Arabic inscription on howdah “Amel Ghiyâth”, made by Ghiyâth; lancé lampas; 70.5 x 36 cm.; Persia, Safavid Dynasty, late 16th - early 17th century; Bargello Museum Exhibition cat. n. 231 (Florence, Bargello Museum inv. n. 428F)



Right: Sigismund von Herberstein in 1541 Turkish dress; coloured engraving, 1559, *Rerum Moscoviticum Commentarii*



Another consideration came to my mind. The Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I sent Von Herberstein in 1541 on a diplomatic mission to Suleiman the Magnificent because the Ottoman Turks had besieged Buda and were advancing towards Vienna. Suleiman bestowed upon the ambassador a “hil’at”, a gift of rich Turkish apparel “Turcarum Imperator Nos Quoque Vestibus Donavit”. This makes one wonder: was the royal gift a purely magnanimous act or were these clothes, that foreigners had to wear to conform to Ottoman court etiquette, a means of psychologically subordinating the person to Ottoman power?

Summing up, this was a pithy and thought-provoking exhibition. The Uffizi Gallery director Eike Schmidt intelligently offered a series of public lectures by the specialist curators. From viewing these exhibitions and reading the catalogue, hopefully having understood the rationale, I have arrived at some conclusions relating to textile studies now.

Present-day scientific technology helps to verify, or sometimes revise, past textile attributions through structural and chemical analyses. When I began my own textile studies in the twentieth century my thesis was on the extraordinary Italian Renaissance gold brocaded velvets in the Bargello. Pick-glass, tweezers, and possibly a bifocal-microscope were then the tools available to students. Fortunate millennial scholars! Stereoscopic microscopes, ultrasound scanning, laser colourant dye detection and spectrographs. These scientific and medical pieces of equipment peer into structures, fibres and chemical compounds. They provide astonishing new information, and through correlated statistical tables may even help trace original provenances.

Left: Gold and silver brocaded velvet panel; Bursa, Turkey, Ottoman Dynasty; late-16th – early 17th century; 193 x 65 cm.; Uffizi Gallery Exhibition n. 89 (Florence, Bargello Museum inv. 2543C)

However, past expertise and literature should not be overlooked. Even the most recent bibliographical compilations may have repeated inaccuracies. For example, The Bargello exhibition catalogue n.184 (Carrand inv. n.2255, An Indo-Portuguese Wall-hanging.) has in some way confused information concerning the subject of the scene. The embroidery here in question is indicated as “The Judgement of Solomon” My article *An Indo-Portuguese Embroidery in the Bargello*, published in 1970 in the bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club (vol. 53, Nos.1&2, 1970) dealt with this piece. I even had a silk analysis from a Pisa University chemist (Accessible on-line: https://www2.cs.arizona.edu/patterns/weaving/articles/nb70_em2.pdf). I had already clearly noticed that three medallion scenes narrate the story of David and Goliath (cf. my fig. 6 Medallion F). Somehow an erroneous iconographical interpretation has been passed on even in this new catalogue. Reading bibliographical references is usually reliable, but, above all, verify by looking! The process of clarification never ends, nothing is perfect - that’s a very Eastern idea!



Above: *David presenting the head of Goliath to the King*, embroidered medallion, Indo-Portuguese, Bengal, first third of XVII th century in R. Bonito Fanelli, *An Indo-Portuguese Embroidery in the Bargello*, p. 30 fig. 6. (Florence, Bargello Museum Cat. n. 184: inv. n. 2255C)

A catalogue of the exhibition *Islamic Art and Florence from the Medici to the 20th century* by Giovanni Curatola (ISBN: 9788809872851) is available with English text

MEDATS Study Day

Early church textiles and embroidery at Norwich Museums

Friday 8th February 2019, 10am – 3.30pm

Norwich Castle Museum, Shirehall Study Centre and Strangers Hall



Above left: Strangers Hall. Above middle: The Bircham Cope, c. 1480 (detail) converted to an altar front at a later date. From the Church of Great Bircham in Norfolk. NWHCM 1939.75 Above right: Norwich Castle Keep.

The day will include a visit to the Castle keep, tour of Strangers Hall and the Shirehall Study Centre to view the collection of early church textiles.

Ninya Mikhaila will be running short workshops on embroidery techniques, including transferring a pattern using the prick and pounce technique and laying down couched threads. Participants will have the option of doing both the workshop and a short tour of Strangers Hall, or taking more time in either the workshop or at Strangers Hall

EARLY BIRD BOOKING UNTIL 31 December 2018

£25 for members, £30 for non-members. After 31 December 2018: £35.

Prices include a buffet lunch

For tickets send payment and stamped addressed envelope to the Ticketing Secretary, Carole Thompson, 9 Fairthorn Road, Charlton, London, SE7 7RL

or book through the MEDATS website <http://medats.org.uk/>

2019 conference

Wool: Cloth, Clothing and Culture

Saturday 6 April 2019 11am-5.30pm, preceded by the AGM of the Society at 10am
St Stephen's Church Hall, 48 Emperors Gate, Knightsbridge, London, SW7 4HJ

Confirmed speakers are:

'A warm house for the wits': The craft, trade or science of capping
Kirstie Buckland, Independent scholar

'Home or away? Woollens, worsteds and the "industrious revolution" in England'
John Styles, The University of Hertfordshire

Hanging by a thread: Anticipating structural damage in Tudor Tapestries through the study of photo-oxidation in historic wool
Nanette Kissi, Independent Scholar

Turning wool into silk: How sixteenth century craftspeople created legal luxuries
Jane Malcolm Davies, Centre for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen

The "industry" of knitting of wool stockings in later 16th century England, especially Norwich
Lesley O'Connell Edwards, MSc student in English Local Studies at the University of Oxford

The first cowl of St Francis of Assisi and the mantle of Bishop Guido
Maria Giorgi, Adjunct Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera and Independent Textiles conservator and Conservation Consultant

The St Clare intermediate tunic
Tina Anderlini, Independent scholar and published author

Distaff spinning: a forgotten aspect of medieval wool textile production
Mary A. M. Cleaton, Jane Hunt, Alice R. Evans & Cathelina de Alessandri



The Bayeux Tapestry, 11th century. By special permission of the city of Bayeux

EARLY BIRD BOOKING UNTIL 31 January 2019

£35 for members, £40 for non-members. After 31 January 2018: £45.

Prices include refreshments and a buffet lunch

For tickets send payment and stamped addressed envelope to the Ticketing Secretary, Carole Thompson, 9 Fairthorn Road, Charlton, London, SE7 7RL or book through the MEDATS website <http://medats.org.uk/>

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS FORTHCOMING

Knitting History Forum

2018 AGM and Conference

Saturday 17th November 2018 10am - 5.15pm

London College of Fashion

20 John Princes Street, London, W1G 0BJ

www.knittinghistory.co.uk

School of Historical dress

Making, Starching & Setting Ruffs c1580-1620

Two day course 24th & 25th November 2018

Farthingales to Hoops c1450-1750

One day course 15th December 2018

52 Lambeth Road, London, SE1 7PP

www.theschoolofhistoricaldress.org.uk

British Museum

I am Ashurbanipal king of the world, king of Assyria

8 November 2018 –24 February 2019

This major exhibition tells the story of Ashurbanipal through the British Museum's unparalleled collection of Assyrian treasures and rare loans. Step into Ashurbanipal's world through displays that evoke the splendour of his palace, with its spectacular sculptures, sumptuous furnishings and exotic gardens.

www.britishmuseum.org

The Costume & Textile Society of Wales

16 February 2019 11am

The function of Robes and Textiles in the life of the Clergy in Llandaff Cathedral

A talk by Rev. Canon Graham Holcombe & Myra Jenkins
St Fagans National Museum of History, Cardiff, CF5 6XB
www.costumeandtextilesocietyofwales.org.uk

West of England Costume Society

The Power of Colour - study day

Saturday 16th March 2019

Somerdale Pavilion Conference Centre,
Tiberius Road, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 2FF
www.wofecostumesociety.org

British Library

Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War

19th October 2018 - 19 February 2019

Treasures from the British Library's own collection, including the beautifully illuminated Lindisfarne Gospels, Beowulf and Bede's Ecclesiastical History, sit alongside stunning finds from Sutton Hoo and the Staffordshire Hoard.

www.bl.uk/events/anglo-saxon-kingdoms

Costume Society Scotland

Monday 4th March 2019

'A 21st Century Viking', A Re-enactment Approach to Medieval Clothing

A talk by Jill Kirkwood, Re-enactor and Viking enthusiast
Augustine United Church, 41 George IV Bridge
Edinburgh, EH1 1EL

www.costumesocietyscotland.co.uk

Enfield & District Embroiderer's Guild

Reconstructing the Black Prince's jupon

Saturday 9th March 2019 3pm - 4pm

An illustrated talk by Ninya Mikhaila
Charis Ctr., Jesus Church, Forty Hill, Enfield, EN2 9EU
www.embroiderersguildenfield.co.uk

Dress & Textile Specialist (DATS) - CALL FOR PAPERS

Redressing Diversity: Making hidden histories visible
16-17 May 2019

DATS invites submissions for the two-day conference, hosted by Norfolk Museums Service, for papers which explore how dress and textiles can be used to make hidden histories more visible and accessible within museums. To submit a proposal please send details to conference@dressandtextilespecialists.org.uk
Deadline for submission is 31 January 2019.
www.dressandtextilespecialists.org.uk

Association of Dress Historians

The New Research in Dress History Conference

Friday 24th May 2019 9am - 6pm

19 speakers presenting papers ranging from the medieval period to the present day
National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street.
Edinburgh, EH1 1JF

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-new-research-in-dress-history-conference-2019-tickets-51326911173

Early Textiles Studies Group - CALL FOR PAPERS

Fibres in Early Textiles: from Prehistory to AD 1600
6 - 7 June 2019

University of Glasgow, Scotland
Conference dedicated to the memory of Karen Finch.
Call for papers by January 11 2019.
Please send abstracts to Margarita Gleba:
mg704@cam.ac.uk
www.earlytextilesstudygroup.org

