

Learning Through Reconstruction, November 11, 2023.

A study day to be held at Lancaster Gate Hotel, 35 Craven Terrace, London, W2 3EL. 10am to 5 pm. Booking for MEDATS members £44. The non-member price is £48. Tickets include a light lunch, tea and coffee.

We are pleased to announce that the following presentations will be part of our next Study Day.



The Cuthbert embroidery in progress. Photo A. Makin

**Dr. Alexandra Makin,
FSA, FRHistS**

The Re-construction of Early-medieval Embroidery: how making can inform our understanding of maker processes

Abstract: Analysing early medieval embroidery for its technical attributes and artistic style can tell us a lot about the construction, materials and influential motifs. Reading

contemporary documents and scholarly work can help us understand which fibres and designs were used, how the embroideries were utilized and what people thought about them. Early medieval sources and archaeological evidence can also shed light on the makers and equipment used. However, if we want to really understand the skill and mind sets of those who designed and made embroidery, we need to do as they did, as much as we are able within our modern confines. To do this we can re-create or make copies of surviving pieces using materials and equipment that are similar to those the original makers used. By doing so, we can enter their world, and experience, up to a point, their working methods and patterns, and understand the decisions they made and why. In turn, this can help us understand the wider implications of embroidery, how it was viewed and used across early medieval society. In this presentation we will explore how the speaker's experiences of re-creating and making copies of early medieval embroideries has informed her knowledge, understanding and research of early medieval embroidery.

Bio: Alexandra is a professional embroiderer, trained on the Royal School of Needlework's apprenticeship; textile archaeologist and scholar of the early medieval period (450-1100 CE), specializing in embroidery, PhD. At present she is the post-doctoral researcher for textiles of the AHRC funded Unwrapping the Galloway Hoard project, which is jointly run by the National Museum of Scotland and the University of Glasgow. Alexandra is particularly interested in the making, use and meaning of embroidery within early medieval society and what this can tell us about people and cultures. One of the ways in which she researches this is through the making / re-creation of early medieval embroideries using 'authentic' materials and equipment.

Dr. Tina Anderlini, CESCUM, Poitiers

What Can We Learn from the So-called St. Louis Shirt?

Abstract: The St Louis shirt is one of the most famous medieval garments. A few different patterns have been proposed since 1970, year of its last 20th century exhibition outside Notre Dame de Paris. In fact, its shape and its exact pattern were not known before March 2011. Examining the garment outside its heavy 19th-century reliquary in 2011, and again inside its new reliquary in 2013, proved that it was full of surprises, and extremely useful to the study of both undergarments and clothing. It helped to answer several legitimate questions: could it really be a 13th-century garment and why? Could have it belong to the Capetian saint, and why? What can we learn from the patterns of its time and of the sewing? The garment, and the few similar examples, have real historical importance, as well as major importance in the history of costume. The fact it is also a relic is another consideration, as the comparison with other textile relics seems to show some common aspects.

Bio: Tina Anderlini, Associate researcher Centre d'études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, Poitiers, PhD in History of Art (2003) at Bordeaux, after studying in Strasbourg (MA) and Lyon (DEA). Her university dissertations were about Burne-Jones. Having a lot of points of interest (from ancient Egypt to Pre-Raphaelites), she now works mainly upon medieval costume, as well as the representation and symbolism of costume in medieval art. She writes for magazines and academic publications, as well as participating in TV documentaries. She's the author of *Le Costume Medieval au XIII^e Siècle* and one of the revisers of the new edition of *Le Costume Médiéval, 1320-1480*.

Lesley O'Connell Edwards, Independent Scholar

Knitted Liturgical Gloves: evidence revealed by reconstruction

Abstract: Knitted liturgical gloves were usually knitted to a fine gauge in silk and metal threads, and often ornately embellished. They were used in religious ceremonies by senior churchmen in the western Christian Church from the twelfth century onwards. A little work has been done on a few gloves, but until the *Holy Hands* project began in 2021 there has been no systematic survey.

Because no archival records exist concerning the construction of these gloves, it is necessary to utilise reconstruction to understand how they might have been knitted, including their knitted-in patterning, seen on the backs of the hands and the cuffs. Such reconstruction, by an experienced knitter, revealed the skills and expertise of the unknown knitters and the challenges they faced, allowed for tactile experience of knitted silk, and provided an estimate of timescale.

This paper will concentrate on two aspects: the recreation of selected cuff patterns, and that of the knitted-in medallions on the back of the hand. The former included detailed examination to chart the designs of the originals, in order to understand the practicalities of working these. The latter explored different techniques, and also enabled an understanding of the quantity of expensive metal yarn possibly needed.

Bio: Lesley O'Connell Edwards is an independent scholar researching the history of hand knitting, using archives and artefacts. She is part of the *Holy Hands* research project, which is the first (and only) systematic study of knitted liturgical gloves. Her other research interests include English working hand knitters and knitting in Tudor England.

Nina Manninen and Nana Asten

Reviving the Lost Wardrobe of Catherine Jagiellon: Insights from Written Sources in 1562-1563



Pendant re-created by Nana Asten

Abstract: This presentation focuses on the collaborative efforts of Nina Manninen and Nana Åsten to reconstruct wardrobes and artefacts of women in 16th-century Finland. Both individuals have a shared passion for historical re-enactment and bring unique expertise to the joint project.

Nina Manninen, a doctoral researcher in archaeology, gained insight into women's clothing during this period by studying their possessions, focusing on those of Catherine Jagiellon, Duchess of Finland. By reconstructing clothing items – which survive only in written documents – with as much historical accuracy as possible,

she supports her research and re-enactment activities. Similarly, Nana Åsten's

skills as a goldsmith and jewellery designer have enabled her to accurately reconstruct the Duchess' jewellery and metal artefacts. These reconstructions were valuable contributions to the project and meaningful additions to understanding this women's belongings.

This presentation will explore the collaboration between Nina and Nana and the benefits of combining research, experimental archaeology, and re-enactment. The reconstructions produced by these individuals provide accessible research results and serve as educational resources for the wider community. The presentation will highlight the meaning of historical accuracy in re-enactment and the value of research and reconstruction in bringing history to life - and vice versa.

Bios: Nina Manninen is a doctoral researcher from the University of Turku who specializes in archaeology, focusing on the material culture of women's clothing in 16th-century Finland. Her research employs meticulous reconstruction techniques to bring historical accuracy to clothing items that have predominantly survived only in written records.



Re-created outfit worn by Nina Manninen

Nina's passion for historical re-enactment drives her research. Her scholarly pursuits extend beyond the academic realm, as she shares her expertise through courses, lectures, and interviews, bridging the gap between academia and practical re-enactment. Nina's work manifests the synergy between rigorous research and immersive historical engagement. Her journey as a doctoral researcher showcases her unwavering dedication to preserving and bringing to life the rich history of 16th-century women through the lens of clothing and material culture.

Nana Åsten's skills as a goldsmith and jewellery designer have enabled her to accurately reconstruct jewellery and metal artefacts. This commitment enriches her understanding and provides valuable educational resources for those interested in the history of 16th-century Finnish

clothing and material culture. Nana Åsten is a Bachelor of Jewellery Design from LAB University of Applied Sciences in Lahti. Due to her vast vocational studies in Ancient Crafts, she also has the basic skills in traditional metalwork, textiles, bone, woodwork and tanning. Her greatest passion is for historical jewelry from the Iron Age to the Renaissance. The main objective of her thesis project was to interpret the aesthetics of the Renaissance into small scale serial production using 3D modelling and traditional wax methods. After graduating she has continued deepening her knowledge in traditional goldsmith techniques as an entrepreneur and by working as a gold/silversmith in Kultakeskus Oy.

Beth Lacey

The Historical Reconstruction of Margaret Layton's 17th-Century Embroidered Jacket

Abstract: The Margaret Layton Jacket, held by the V&A, is an extremely important garment in the teaching of historical accuracy. When comparing 17th century portraiture and actual garments, there are only a few examples where a surviving garment is almost perfectly depicted in a painting. Within Margaret Layton's portrait, exact floral and animal motifs can be matched up to the surviving jacket, providing insight into the artistic licence incorporated by painters as they created both idealized and visual images of their sitters.



Beth Lacey with the jacket

My talk will discuss the research I conducted through museum archive visits as well as online resources, ensuring I sourced historically accurate materials mirroring those used in the original jacket. This will address how I overcame challenges sourcing these materials and the various samples I created to practise with the techniques and fabrics I was unfamiliar with. Furthermore, I will explain my making processes and historical techniques used on my jacket, most of which are exact to the original jacket, and my decision to only embroider half the garment.

Because the archived jacket is so fragile yet remains such an important garment which is studied by hundreds of people, one of my main goals for this project was to create a replica which exactly reflected the original. From the hand sewing techniques of the embroideries and materials, down to the exact ply of thread, this recreation of Margaret

Layton's Jacket can be viewed and studied by a wider audience, with less risk to the delicate original.

Bio: In 2023 Beth Lacey took on the challenge of historically recreating her winning garment for the Costume Society's Patterns of Fashion Competition. The stunningly intricate embroideries of the Tudor and Stuart eras have always been her favourite items of dress to study. When presented with the rare opportunity to dedicate four months of her life to recreating such a garment, she knew it was an opportunity she could not pass up. She is a Bournemouth Arts University graduate in Costume Making and the Costume Society's 2023 Patterns of Fashion Winner.

Instagram Portfolio is [@beth.lacey.costumes](https://www.instagram.com/beth.lacey.costumes)

Website portfolio is www.bethlaceycostume.com

Email: beth.lacey.costumes@gmail.com

Dr. Amy Miller & Alison Beadnell

Learning through Reconstruction: The 17th-Century Body

Abstract: As part of a wider project with the WEA we have been focussing on seventeenth-century fashion and exploring the synergies between the historical and material record. Although our larger project considers the evolution of the three key elements of dress across gender and the period (the collar, shirt, and doublet) this paper will specifically look at a

doublet in the collection of Claydon House, National Trust, that belonged to a member of the Verney family and dating from 1620. By combining our different approaches, marrying text and image with reconstruction, we are working towards an understanding of the textiles and technologies at play in the early 17th-century and how they shaped the masculine body, fashioning an ideal, but ultimately illustrating that the garment reveals the reality between the two.

Bios: Dr Amy Miller is a curator, lecturer and historian who specialises in the meanings of dress in the contexts of gender, economics and social hierarchies. Alison Beadnell is a fashion industry professional who specialised in pattern cutting and garment construction. She is also a materials anthropologist who brings an experimental archaeology approach to her research on the technologies and materiality of historical clothing.

Toni Buckby

"an unstitched coif..." echoes of creative freedom through contemporary embroidery practice

Abstract: This paper presents "an unstitched coif...", focusing on stitching as a physical and gestural conversation both within our contemporary communities of practice and with (usually) unknown historic needleworkers. It proposes that through communal embroidery practice, a collective body of knowledge can be built and the creative agency of past, present, and (possible) future needleworkers revealed.

Blackwork was a popular sixteenth and early seventeenth century embroidery technique, characterised by its use of black silk thread worked on white linen. Due to the high iron content of the mordant, many historic blackwork embroideries are in an advanced state of disintegration exposing the underlying designs. The sparse outlines and formal simplicity of these underdrawings reveal the creative freedom of the embroiderers, something easily observed when comparing embroideries with similar designs but worked in diverse techniques. However, the embroiderers' creative agency has typically been overlooked.

"an unstitched coif..." explores this absence through contemporary embroidery practice, inviting needleworkers to come together to stitch their own interpretation of a coif design (V&A, T.844-174), share their techniques, and reflect on their experiences. Over 140 embroiderers have taken part in the project. Diversity of background, experience, and skill was encouraged and has inspired a range of contemporary and historic interpretations.

Bio: Toni Buckby is a Sheffield based fine artist working with traditional textile techniques, experimental digital/electronics, and acts of collective making. Her work explores ideas of skilled practice, the value of labour, the visibility of authorship, and the creation and accessibility of practical knowledge. Specialising in fine hand embroidery, Toni is currently working on a PhD with Sheffield Hallam University and the Victoria & Albert Museum looking at how fine art practice can be used to investigate, reconstruct, interpret, and present fragile and inaccessible Blackwork embroideries.

Research Website: <http://blackworkembroidery.org>

Artist Website: <https://tonibuckby.com>