

# The Textile Conservation Centre

---

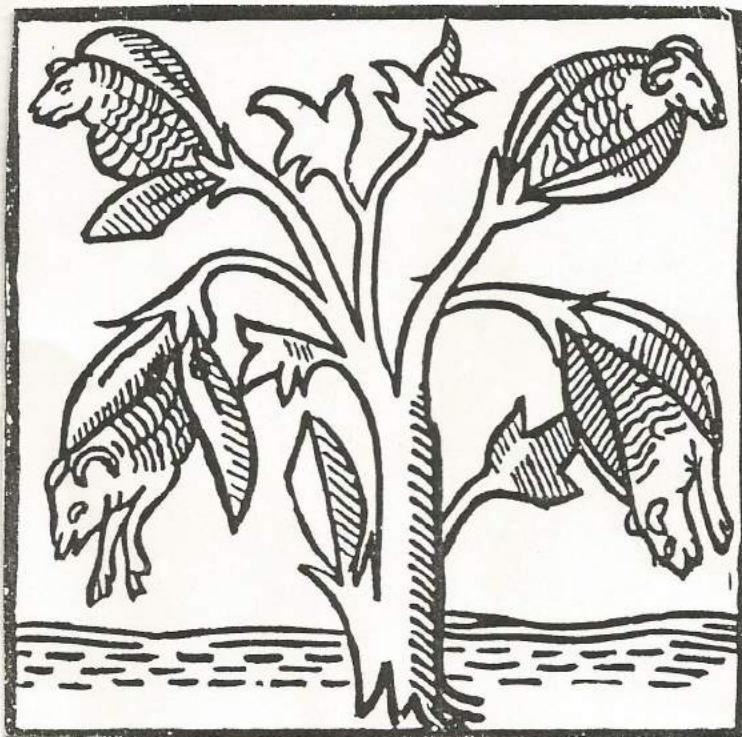
Apartment 22, Hampton Court Palace,  
East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU.  
Telephone: 01-977 4943

A registered charity No. 269430  
Founder — Karen Finch, O.B.E.

Director — Mette Tang Simpson

## REPORT ON THE REFERENCE COLLECTION OF THE TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE

DECEMBER 1987 - KAREN FINCH OBE FRSA FIIC



# The Textile Conservation Centre

---

Apartment 22, Hampton Court Palace,  
East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU.  
Telephone: 01-977 4943

A registered charity No. 269430  
Founder — Karen Finch, O.B.E.

Director — Mette Tang Simpson

## REPORT ON THE REFERENCE COLLECTION OF THE TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE

DECEMBER 1987 - KAREN FINCH OBE FRSA FIIC

ORGANISATION - PURPOSES - SOURCES - CATALOGUING - ACKNOWLEDGMENTS -  
CONTINUATION - DISPOSITIONS.

### ORGANISATION

The work on cataloguing the Collection began in 1975 when it was moved from 7 Western Gardens, Ealing to Hampton Court Palace.

There were many difficulties to overcome because of the lack of space and inadequate facilities and progress was slow until 1985 when the Warrant of the third apartment for the Centre was given and the generosity of the Clothworkers' Foundation enabled the installation of bookcases for the library and fitted cupboards arranged in sections for the Collection.

Eight sections on two walls are fitted with twelve trays each. The first two sections provide examples of techniques, the next six sections are intended to give a chronological overview of how the techniques were used and developed in accord with the influence of fashion and technological progress.

Each section is arranged for the purpose of showing textiles made at the same time in various cultures.



The final row of cupboards makes provision for hanging space to show a few pieces of dress illustrating dressmaking techniques and their development before and after the advent of the sewing machine. There is also space for a few rollers for large pieces that cannot go into the trays.

Upper cupboards contain uncatalogued material for use in conservation and to illustrate the damage caused by wear and tear, incompatibility and environmental problems. There are special collections of tapestry and upholstery materials and techniques for demonstration and a section with objects conserved by the students as coursework.

The grant of £7000 from the Radcliffe Trust for covering the expenses for one year of cataloguing the collection, has enabled me to sort the material into groups outlined in the key to the Collection - Appendix A - and to discover that there are some areas in the chronological section that are not represented and a considerable surplus in others.

#### COLLECTION PURPOSES

The Collection began as an extension to my specialised library of books, postcards with textile subjects, magazines and journals, that now forms the nucleus of the Textile Conservation Centre's library, and is intended as a vehicle for increasing the textile knowledge of the users in the swiftest possible time.

The Collection was first used as a teaching aid in 1969 when I was asked to provide an overview of textiles and their making to the History of Dress students at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

From 1973 when the Textile Conservation Course with the Institute began it became an adjunct to my lectures on the history of textile techniques. The collection helped me to put across the philosophy on which the course was founded, namely the treatment of artistically or culturally important

textiles as documents of history. Equipment used for the teaching included the small Olympus microscope, the LERVAD loom and various types of narrow weave equipment from Denmark.

For the purpose of crossreferencing with the library, the conservation records and the photographic material two sets of two filing cabinets were purchased and installed in the library. The corresponding drawers in each set were for the files of completed commissions with before and after reports giving Textile Conservation Centre numbers only (Clients names should be removed for security reasons).

The slides for every object should be in the cabinet on the left and the Reports and black and white photographs in the corresponding drawer in the cabinet on the right so that the students may have easy access to learn from the casehistories concerning commissions undertaken at the Centre by individual study - which - since the subject is intensely visual - may be aided by viewing slides while comparing the techniques by which the objects were made, with the samples of similar techniques available in the collection. I suggest that my microscope is kept in the collection to provide the students with the means for close study in accord with the purpose for which it was originally bought.

The reports concerning Students work on the Collection are separate to the reports on commissions and the objects conserved by the students are available for further study including of the long term effects of conservation.

When fully integrated with the library and conservation records the collection should form a unique teaching aid of benefit on several levels by:



- giving opportunities for close study of textiles in as many techniques as may be fitted into the space available.
- giving opportunities to study changes wrought by time and how these may manifest themselves.
- providing material for first conservation projects and methods of conservation.
- providing material for special research projects involving techniques, colour, finishing treatments and their reactions to display in different environments.
- providing teaching aids for short courses during vacations of full time students.
- providing material for study by interns and observers to make their stay at the Textile Conservation Centre less dependent on the space and time available for them in the workrooms.

#### COLLECTION SOURCES

The Collection includes pieces given by my family and friends or made by me at home and at Kunsthaandvaerker Skolen in Copenhagen. It grew from finds in junkshops, and jumblesales and was added to by those who became interested in my teaching and wished to find a home for pieces of no monetary value, but of interest for the purpose of providing samples of textile techniques. Chief among them were Ninna Rathje - late of the Historical Archaeological Research Centre at Lejre in Denmark, Jessie and Alice Jones, late of the Royal School of Needlework, Dorothee Spier, Doris Bradley, Nancy Sayer, Evelyn Birkill, late of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Genitha Halsey who was with me in Ealing, our neighbour Heather Campbell and Lady Faith Culme-Seymour. Since

we came to Hampton Court Palace, major donors have included Everilda Gibbs, the Geffrye Museum, the Embroiderers' Guild, Barbara Gardiner and Lady Gibson. Of Textile Conservation Centre members who have contributed special mention may be made of Kerstin Aronsson for a collection of wool samples.

From the beginning of the Collection in Ealing pieces of special interest because of their design or rarity were accepted on the proviso that if they were wanted for a museum collection, they would be given to that collection as from the original donor.

Besides the Victoria and Albert Museum recipients include the Costume Museum in Bath, the Court Dress Collection at Kensington Palace, the Geffrye Museum, Gunnersbury Museum, the Museum of London, the Royal Museums of Scotland, Temple Newsam House in Leeds, the Petrie Collection at University College, London, Ulster Museum and The Whitworth Gallery, Manchester.

#### CATALOGUING

The work for which the expenses have been covered by the Radcliffe Trust began in August 1986 by sorting the pieces into their appropriate trays. Because of the Reference Collection Room also being used for lectures it was essential that this work was done before October 1986 and the return of the students.

It was a colossal task reminiscent of playing with a rubic cube, but like this it got easier with time.

After the sorting of the collection the cataloguing began by identifying the pieces on a preliminary form - Appendix B - giving each piece a number and listing it in a ledger. Next the information from the preliminary sheet is listed on an index card that also makes provision for future crossreferencing with the library and conservation records and any further information concerning identification that may surface in the course of time.



Each piece is marked with a label or tag giving its number, section and tray location. The index cards should be available to the students, but the ledgers should be kept by the Teaching Department. Lists of the pieces kept in each tray have been made for the main trays of the techniques section.

The Techniques and the major part of the chronological section have been identified. The surplus has been put into boxes and stored in the attic or on top of the cupboards; very few of the surplus pieces have been catalogued but all the boxes are being marked for content. Archival quality storage materials have been used together with acid free cardboard boxes.

From October 1986 the work was done in conjunction with my weekly lectures on the History of Textile Techniques. My teaching included setting two textile identification projects for the first year students - of which the project of Term II - Appendix C - on the narrow weaves in the Collection, proved particularly useful.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The major part of the cataloguing has been done in Ealing with help from a number of volunteers - first and foremost my husband Norman Finch, who has done all the fetching and carrying between Ealing and Hampton Court Palace and generally made this enormous task possible.

I am grateful to him and to Pamela Warner for her long involvement in the organisation of the Collection and her work on presenting the lace techniques, to Heather Campbell for secretarial assistance, to Judith Stoker for assistance with stitching on numbers and her help with practical organisation, to Anne Castelete and Audrey Aubrey-Fletcher of NADFAS for measuring the

pieces and filling in Index Cards and to Anne Taylor for her work on the tabulation and presentation of the result of the students project on the identification of the narrow weaves and to all students past and present who have helped with the Collection.

I would also like to give special thanks to those involved earlier, to Stella Mary Newton whose interest and encouragement helped to turn the Collection into a teaching aid, to Greta Putnam for her practical help with the research, to Margaret Bartlett and Margaret Forbes who helped with identifying metal yarns in the Royal School of Needlework tradition, to Nancy Kimmins and her husband who helped to move the Collection to Hampton Court Palace, to Clara Lamb and to the group of volunteers from NADFAS who put labels on the pieces brought from Ealing. To Barbara Gardiner for facilitating the viewing of slides as part of the studies of casehistories.

I thank them all and I thank all those who have given their time to help with the identification, especially our President and his wife - Donald and Monique King, who helped with the woven pieces and Santina Levey and Andrew Oddy who advised on general cataloguing.

I am grateful to members of staff at Kew Gardens and to many colleagues in Museums in Britain and abroad whose help and advice has been invaluable from the very beginning of the Collection and its use as a teaching aid, and to every member of the Centre, who have contributed their knowledge and made the Collection worthwhile - in particular Danielle Bosworth for her work with the silks and her teaching of weave analysis and the recognition of weaves. Her attendance over two years on the special CIETA Analysis Course in Lyon resulted in a very valuable report written especially for the students of the Textile Conservation Centre.



We are grateful to the Crafts Council for the grant that enabled Danielle to take part.

The imaginative use made by our Head of Studies and Research, Margaret Roberts of the Collection for teaching, has been made possible because of the work done by:

Danielle Bosworth  
Caroline Clark  
Stephen Cousens  
Dinah Eastop  
Jennifer Fitzgerald-Bond  
Elizabeth Flintoff  
Maria Kralovansky  
Marion Lamb  
Frances Lennard  
Sally Parks  
Eileen Powell  
Poppy Singer  
Agnes Timar  
Wendy Toulson

and on the initiative of Kathryn Gill who started the Upholstery Collection and Sherry Doyal who expanded it and who came to the Centre outside working hours to put this section in order. The Collection also owes much to the research on the recognition of fibres, chemical treatments and colour done by Nicholas Eastaugh and Anthony Smith.

I am grateful to the Clothworkers Company for enabling the Textile Conservation Centre to put up the beautiful purpose built housing of the library and the Collection, and to the Radcliffe Trust for granting funding for the expenses of the cataloguing. Between them they have made the Collection accessible and put the crowning glory on the work of all those who have helped to create this special teaching aid.

## CONTINUATION

I have had to decide to complete only the work planned for the first three stages of turning the Collection into the unique study resource - Appendix D - for which it was intended when the Course with the Courtauld Institute of Art was set up in 1973.

The work on identification should not be considered complete until the verification provided for in Paragraph eleven. The various stages need not be done in the order outlined.

About 1500 pieces have been described and catalogued.

Awaiting individual descriptions are the Collection of:

- Rug and Tapestry pieces
- Costumes in the hanging Section
- Hats in the attic store
- Ladies Caps
- Handkerchiefs and Scarves
- Feathers and Flower decorations
- Fur garments and pieces
- Cane and Straw
- Yarns and Threads
- Equipment for weaving, printing and lacemaking
- Dressmaking Accessories
- Pieces conserved by the Students

For the purpose of becoming familiar with the Reference Collection as a whole, these individual collections could form useful first year students projects of identification and grouping.



Students may also acquire familiarity with the Collection through projects concerning crossreference indexes - Appendix E - and preparing lists of contents for each tray.

The Collection has been put together from the material available and reflects my own interest in techniques and conservation but is in no sense fully representative of all the aspects a conservator may encounter. The tray marked 'Colour' is a good example of this fact. The pieces include examples of dyed fabrics and yarns to illustrate built in damage caused by dyestuffs and changes caused by fading and decay but very few straight colour samples.

The identification of dyestuffs in the Collection might begin with this tray and serve several purposes including providing analytical identification experience for the students and increasing the usefulness of the Collection as a whole.

#### DISPOSITIONS

I hope the work will go on and the Collection grow in usefulness and continue to suit the needs of teaching but should the Collection no longer be used for the purpose of teaching on the Course with the Courtauld Institute of Art, I would wish to be given back my looms and microscope together with the pieces which were brought from Ealing when the Centre was set up in 1975 and to make the same proviso for the books marked with my name, which were retained by the Centre on my retirement in 1986.

*Karen Finch.*

Karen Finch OBE FRSA FIIC  
Founder of the Textile Conservation Centre  
at Hampton Court Palace

TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE

REFERENCE COLLECTION

KEY TO ORGANISATION

Duplicate material	Duplicate material teaching - research Woven fabrics	Duplicate material teaching - research Dress	Duplicate material teaching - research Household
For analysis of fibres, dyestuffs, finishes, construction	For couching and sandwiching	For cleaning and conservation Embroidery	For cleaning and conservation Woven fabrics
<b>A</b> Fibres - Animal Felt	<b>B</b> Knotting, Filet lace, Tatting Knitting, crochet	<b>C</b> Early textiles up to 1700 Tapestry - rugs	<b>D</b> 1700 - 1790 Tapestry Rugs
Fibres - Vegetable Paper	Whitework Hand Machine	Ceremonial Textiles	Ceremonial Textiles
Ancient Techniques Basic weaves - Braids Cords	Bobbin and needlelace Hand Machine	Household Textiles	Household Textiles
Designs forming part of weave	Imitation lace Tape Chemical	European fashions Women	European fashions Women
Designs extra to weave	Decorated net Hand Machine	Fans	Men
Diaper weaves Damask	Embroidery General	Lace Accessories	Children
Compound weaves with several warp and weft systems - velvets	Embroidery With Wool	Handstitched Underwear	Scandinavia Western Europe
Narrow Weaves Passementerie	Goldwork	Ladies Caps	Eastern and Central Europe
Colour Dyeing	Fabrics with Beads Sequins Spangles	Scarves Handkerchiefs	Mediterranean Near East
Painting Printing	Feathers Ornaments	Fur Leather	Asia - Far East
Finishing Techniques	Cane - Grass Straw - Leaves	Dressmaking Accessories	The Americas
Yarns Threads	Equipment		Armed Forces



TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTREREFERENCE COLLECTIONKEY TO ORGANISATION

Material used for Tapestry lectures and Demonstrations	Material used for Upholstery lectures and Demonstrations	Material used for Conservation History Lectures	Material illustrating damage caused by environmental factors
For Rug and Carpet lectures and demonstrations	For Soft Furnishing lectures and demonstrations	Wear and tear and various forms of repair	Damage caused by incompatibility of fibres and dyes
1790 - 1840 Tapestry - Rugs	1840 - 1890 Tapestry - Rugs	1890 - 1930 Tapestry - Rugs	1930 - Tapestry - Rugs
Ceremonial Textiles	Ceremonial Textiles	Ceremonial Textiles	Ceremonial Textiles
Household Textiles	Household Textiles	Household Textiles	Household Textiles
European fashions Women	European fashions Women	European fashions Women	European fashions Women
Men	Men	Men	Men
Children	Children	Children	Children
Scandinavia Western Europe	Scandinavia Western Europe	Scandinavia Western Europe	Scandinavia Western Europe
Eastern and Central Europe	Eastern and Central Europe	Eastern and Central Europe	Eastern and Central Europe
Mediterranean Near East	Mediterranean Near East	Mediterranean Near East	Mediterranean Near East
Asia	Asia	Asia	Asia
Far East	Far East	Far East	Far East
The Americas	The Americas	The Americas	The Americas

TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE

REFERENCE COLLECTION

KEY TO ORGANISATION

Material used for history of cleaning lectures	Material used for teaching textile techniques	Material used for demonstrations, displays and open days	General Store	Parasols and other three-dimensional objects used for demonstrations and lectures
Cleaning Problems	Technique samples	Demonstration material for mounting		
Hanging Space Stack J	Large objects on rollers	Hanging Space Stack K	Hanging Space Stack L	
17th & 18th Centuries		19th Century	20th Century	
	Card Index			
	Planchest			
	Completed Conservation Projects			



TEMPORARY CATALOGUE SHEET

Cat No: R.C.

Name:

Date:

Origin:

Fibres and materials:

Technique:

Dimensions:

Donor and date:

Description:

Colour

Condition:

Cross Reference:

Any other remarks:

Cataloguer and date:

Store Location:

# The Textile Conservation Centre

---

Apartment 22, Hampton Court Palace,  
East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU.  
Telephone: 01-977 4943

A registered charity No. 269430

Founder — Karen Finch, O.B.E.

Director — Mette Tang Simpson

## HISTORY OF TEXTILE TECHNIQUES - Lent Term 1987

Karen Finch

Group project for first year diploma students with one seminar presentation by each student during the term.

### Classification of material for the production of a catalogue of narrow fabric for the Reference Collection.

Narrow fabric - definition by the Textile Institute in Manchester.

1. Any textile fabric not exceeding 18" width with two selvages.
2. Any trimming.

The catalogue to be in eight parts as follows:

Part One	Up to 1700
Part Two	From 1700 until 1750
Part Three	" 1750 " 1800
Part Four	" 1800 " 1850
Part Five	" 1850 " 1900
Part Six	" 1900 " 1930
Part Seven	" 1930 " 1960
Part Eight	" 1960 onwards

The students will be assigned a number of pieces dated within approximately each period and would be expected to:

- Verify that the dating is right and exchange if necessary.
- Outline the possible use for which the pieces were made using the TCC postcard collection to illustrate as appropriate.
- Fill in a TCC Reference Collection index card for each piece.

### Weekly seminars

The weekly seminars may concern the developments in the country chosen of narrow fabric techniques, equipment and design.

(Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Asia, U.S.A.).

Or the appearance of the colours predominating in each period, together with the names given to these by the prevailing fashion and the origin of those names when known.



REFERENCE COLLECTION

The Reference is essentially a working collection that is meant to be handled. It is from the collection that our students get their introduction to historic textile techniques and practical conservation including the handling and storage of textiles in a museum environment.

For the purpose of getting the collection to function efficiently as a History of Textile Techniques Study Resource, the work involved is planned in stages.

The stages may overlap from time to time because of the need for continued usage of the collection for teaching and demonstration and for other reasons.

Members of the T.C.C. staff and the Embroiderer's Guild have been involved with the preliminary organisation for more than 2 years and have provided an overview of the content to provide plans for the layout of the collection as shown in the attached plans.

The stages in the preparation of the Resource are:

- I Preliminary organisation of Collection.
- II Selection of objects for each category.
- \*III Labelling each piece with numbers and simple description of technique and presumed function.
- \* IV Finding relevant illustrations in Postcard Collection and a method of cross-referencing.
- V Listing significant shortfalls in collection.
- VI Setting in motion a search for missing techniques samples or the making of copies of these.
- \*VII Linking T.C.C. Conservation Reports and Photographic Records to collection.
- VIII Linking Embroiderer's Guild collection and records to T.C.C. collections.
- IX Preparing bibliographies for each technique.
- X Providing a card index for each tray with keywords for the retrieval system chosen for the Centre.
- \* XI Verifying preliminary dating and purpose of objects by analysis and documentation of their fibres, dyestuffs and techniques.
- \*XII Setting up a system for the self-teaching of basic techniques - with supervision by Centre staff - of students who wish to become familiar with special techniques for the purpose of embarking on a course of studies at the Centre or elsewhere.

Cont'd.....



- \*XIII Setting up a system of teaching short courses with invited specialists as well as a staff input for the Friends of the T.C.C. whether for professional or just greatly interested people.
- \* XIV Setting up a system of giving case histories and demonstrations by Centre staff using examples from the collection. This should heighten interest in our activities and bring in more Friends to support the T.C.C.

The interest in historic textiles is growing very fast and the provision of this resource will help to keep the Centre in the forefront as a teaching institution able to give instruction on a factual level of knowledge and research.

The work should at all times be tied up with the students need to do practical laboratory and analysis exercises and the parts where they or the staff can play a significant role are marked with a star. By constantly involving both staff and students in the development of the resource, we should ensure maximum growth and interest both in the individual projects and in the subject as a whole. This will also facilitate the increasing understanding of the significance of technical and cultural history on the study of textiles and its influence on our approach to textile conservation.

Notes prepared by Karen Finch, Founder, for the Meeting of the Executive Meeting of the T.C.C. on August 19, 1986.

14.8.86.



CATALOGUING OF THE TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE REFERENCE COLLECTION

## GUIDE

Catalogue Ledger	Entries in acquisition order. Items numbered, described and given location.
Card Index No1	Item number - description and location. Space for further information.
Card Index No.2	Contents of each tray in "key" order.

## Suggested Cross Reference Headings include:

FIBRES

Wool  
Silk  
Linen  
Cotton  
Manmade  
Others

DYESTUFFS

Natural  
Synthetic  
Dyeing  
Painting  
Printing  
Ageing

TECHNIQUES

Spinning  
Early Techniques  
Weaving  
Lacemaking  
Embroidery  
Miscellaneous

DRESSMAKING

Women  
Men  
Children  
Ceremonial

FURNISHING

Upholstery  
Curtains  
Household Linen  
Ceremonial

TAPESTRY

English  
European  
Coptic  
Other types

COUNTRY OR ORIGIN

Britain  
Western Europe  
Eastern Europe  
Near East

Asia - India  
Far East  
Americas  
Africa

CONSERVATION

Students work  
Wear and Tear  
Incompatibility  
Supporting Materials

METALWORK

Weaving  
Embroidery  
Non-woven  
Sequins  
Beads  
Other Types

FINISHING TREATMENTS

Bleaching  
Fulling  
Watering-Moiré  
Glazing  
Proofing  
Others

RUGS - CARPETS

English  
European  
Near East  
Far East  
African - Egypt  
American