

Karen Finch O.B.E.

A tribute by Liz Davies, expressed on behalf of all members of the London guild

Karen Finch, a long time member of our guild has been honoured by the University of Southampton by being awarded an honorary doctorate for her life's work in founding and setting up the Textile Conservation centre.

Karen has been involved with textiles all her working life, first in her native Denmark and since 1946 when she came to England. Her experiences during the 1950s of working on damaged tapestries in the V&A changed the way repairs were carried out. Prior to her input, textiles were 'restored' with little regard to their original design and construction. Karen's determination to see that all historic textiles were conserved in their original state led to her setting up a tapestry conservation course to teach conservation methods to conservators first from the V&A and then to others from museums all over the world. The conservation work done by the students on a huge range of textiles, including archeological and ethnographic items, dress, dolls, tapestries, regimental colours, flags and banners, paid for the costs of running the workshops in Ealing and Acton.

With the help of many associates and others interested in conservation the Textile Conservation Centre was set up in the 1970s and eventually moved into Hampton Court Palace in 1975. The premises were rent free and the conservation project done by the students paid for all the outgoings. The Textile Conservation centre has now moved into purpose designed premises on Southampton University's Winchester School of Art campus, which has a centre for the History of Textiles and Dress.

We congratulate Karen on receiving this honorary doctorate in recognition of her dedication to her work, ensuring that textiles all over the world are treated with the respect they deserve.

Liz Davies

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