

# Department of Textile Conservation Newsletter

Spring 2019 Volume 3

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Kristine Kamiya

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Laura Peluso

### Associate Laboratory Coordinator

Beatrice Bacolod

### Volunteers

Caroline Borderies

Richard Gradkowski

Yael Rosenfield

Ruth Rosenthal

Gemma Rossi

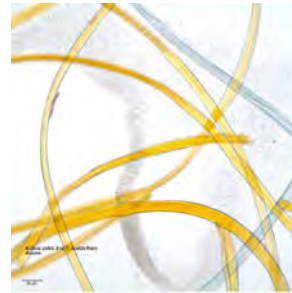
Midori Sato/Conservator Emerita

## Instagram

Welcome to the Department of Textile Conservations Instagram Feed! The entire department contributes to this vibrant platform for sharing the work we do.



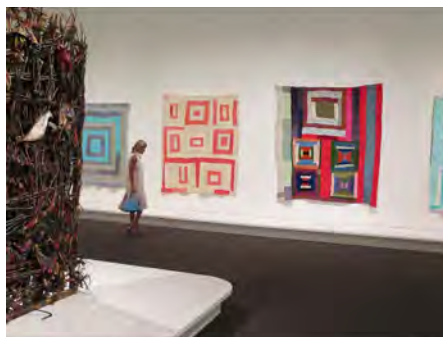
textilesmet A very hungry caterpillar!  
While traveling in Japan this week, Conservator Minsun Hwang captured this striking image of a wild *Antheraea yamanai* or "Tensan" silkworm snacking on the spine of an oak leaf. This trip is a continuation of Minsun's previous research on silk cultivation; it has been fully supported and funded by The Met through a travel grant. #silkworm #textileconservation #mettextiles



textilesmet In preparation for the exhibition "History Refused to Die," Conservator Kristine Kamiya conducted fiber analysis on quilts from Gee's Bend, Alabama that are currently on display beside other artworks on paper, canvas, and mixed-media sculpture. Further analysis revealed that artist Loretta Pettway constructed the "Medallion" quilt from scraps of fabric made of rayon-acetate in addition to those of cotton and polyester. This sequence of images captured the dissolution of fibers in acetone, the confirmation of a rayon-acetate blend.



textilesmet After careful treatment by the Department of Textile Conservation, our colleagues from the Buildings Department placed a protective cover over this #16thcentury carpet. It is now on view in "Carpets for Kings: Six Masterworks of Iranian Weaving." Accession number 17.120.127. Images: Julia Carlson #mettextiles #textileconservation #islamictextiles #carpetsforkings



textilesmet Don't miss your opportunity to see quilts from Gee's Bend, Alabama by artists Annie Mae Young, Lucy Mingo, and Loretta Pettway. The exhibition "History Refused to Die" will close on Sunday, September 23. Image: Beatrice Bacolod and Laura E. Peluso. #mettextiles #textileconservation @newyorktextilemonth



textilesmet Spring's observant eye reminds us to delight in the warmer weather and blossoming flowers throughout Central Park and New York City. Our eye-con for April is this detail from a circa 5-6th century #Egyptian tapestry panel of wool. Accession number 90.5.848 #mettextiles



## Now On View

Art of Native America:  
the Charles and Valerie Diker Collection

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# Introduction

Janina Poskrobko

We began 2019 with significant changes in the staff of the Department of Textile Conservation. Yael Rosenfield, liaison conservator for textiles in the Department of American Decorative Arts, has retired and Alexandra Barlow assumed responsibility for that collection. Alexandra has been working with Olha Yarema-Wynar on the conservation of the Mortlake tapestries. We welcomed two temporary staff members: Shelley Greenspan, returned to The Met after an 18-year absence to assist Kristine Kamiya with the conservation and installation of 26 large fiber sculptures by Mrinalini Mukherjee for the exhibition, *Phenomenal Nature* on view at The Met Breuer June 4 - September 29. Anna Szalecki, a specialist in conservation and restoration of tapestries, has joined Kathrin Colburn and Kisook Suh, working on the *King Arthur* tapestry from the *Heroes* tapestries at The Met Cloisters..

The department was involved in several gallery rotations and new exhibitions. *The World Between Empires* (March 18-June 23), initiated a productive collaboration between Met and Yale University staff on the materials and techniques of textiles from this period. Kristine Kamiya skillfully installed five kimonos and one costume in *The Tale of Genji* exhibition (March 5-June 16). The entire department collaborated on the wet-cleaning of two tapestries: a sixteenth century Armorial tapestry for the British galleries opening, and the *King Arthur* tapestry woven around 1400. We are looking forward to an exciting fall schedule, including *The Last Knight* exhibition (October 7, 2019-January 5, 2020) and numerous new installations in preparation for the *Making the Met* exhibition, marking our institution's 150th year anniversary celebrations.

We are fortunate to have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues within the Museum and at other institutions. In February I was asked to present my research on Polish sashes at an event hosted by Sheila Canby in the Department of Textile Conservation for the Friends of Islamic Art. Katja Schmitz von Ledebur, Curator at The Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna and Fellow at in the Lehman Collection, worked with Cristina Balloffet Carr in close examination of Lehman embroideries that relate to embroideries in The Kunsthistorisches Museum. The Met has a professional exchange program with the Victoria and Albert museum in London and Cristina was able to expand on this research during her four weeks as a Research Fellow at the V&A.

We continue to be very involved with The Met's initiative to design and build a dedicated facility for IPM (Integrated Pest Management), which will include a purpose-built freezer with pre- and post- treatment areas. Until the new set-up is ready, Beatrice Bacolod conducts anoxic treatments in a temporary space and, as an added precaution, we make an effort to quarantine all de-installed textiles prior to their return to storage.

Finally, with the inaugural meeting of our Visiting Committee on May 17th, we look forward to the interest and support of a professional group of scholars, collectors and textile lovers.



# Conservation Projects



## Cleaning a Chintz from the European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Collection

This hanging was recently prepared for display in the new British Galleries, due to open in January 2020. The large textile was in good condition, but was stained in the center. Conservators Giulia Chiostrini and Julia Carlson determined the most effective method of reducing the discoloration that marred the effects of the battle scenes depicted. Physical gels of varying compositions were tested, but these left significant tidelines on the fine cotton fabric. An application of 5% EDTA solution proved to be the most effective cleaning method. The stains were sufficiently reduced to minimize their effect on the overall composition.

Treatment consisted of a local application of 5% EDTA solution followed by rinsing with D.I. water. This sequence was repeated three times. Blotter paper, pressed lightly against the surface of the wet textile, helped absorb excess EDTA solution and D.I. water. To accelerate drying and avoid tidelines a portable suction disc was placed underneath the treated area.

Left: Indian chintz, before 1763, Coromandel Coast for the market. Cotton plain weave, drawn and painted with mordants and resists, dyed, 115 ¼" inches height x 103 ½" inches wide. MMA 2014.88



Before treatment

After treatment





### The Heroes Tapestries at The Met Cloisters

“When the tapestries themselves were acquired, restorations were started within an hour.”

– Margaret B. Freeman, 1949

From 1947 to 1949, The Cloisters’ director James J. Rorimer and curator Margaret B. Freeman led a group of restorers in the reconstruction of newly acquired tapestry fragments into four hangings. These hangings constitute the *Heroes* tapestries, thought to be woven around 1400. After nearly seventy years on display at The Cloisters, the tapestries show signs of weakness due to stress from hanging and environmental exposure.

In collaboration with the Department of Medieval Art & The Cloisters, the Department of Textile Conservation has embarked on a conservation campaign of the series. *King Arthur* is the first tapestry to have been de-installed and transferred to The Met for treatment. After photo documentation by the Imaging Studio, the condition of the tapestry is now being assessed and recorded by a team of conservators. Our goal is to stabilize its fragile condition and improve its visual appearance in order to return *King Arthur* to The Cloisters by the end of 2020.

We wish to express our gratitude to Jane and Michael Horvitz for their generous donation to the department, which makes the first phase of this ambitious undertaking possible. We are also grateful to Richard Gradkowski and his late wife Marilyn Masiero for funding the construction of a table for the conservation treatment of the series.

Top to bottom: The *Heroes* tapestries in situ at The Cloisters. Deinstallation of *King Arthur* at The Cloisters. Photography of *King Arthur* by the Imaging Studio. Table for the treatment of *King Arthur*.





Top left: Closeup of pressure-sensitive tape on the reverse, before conservation.

Bottom left: Removal of adhesive residue setup under the microscope.

Center: Overall image of the tapestry. Boys engaging in various activities.

Top right: obverse

Bottom right: reverse

## When the Temporary Threatens to Become Permanent: Collaboration between Paper and Textile Conservation Disciplines in Treatment of a 17th-century Chinese Tapestry

This rare 17th-century Chinese tapestry, accession 2011.158, was in fragile condition, with stains, discoloration, creases, and losses.

Prior to entering The Met's collection in 2011, fragile areas were repaired with pressure-sensitive tape on the reverse. The tape had been in place for a long time and could not be removed mechanically. Conservator Minsun Hwang experimented with mock-ups of pressure-sensitive tapes on old silk fabrics, simulating the condition of the tapestry, and determined the most effective solvent was water and acetone (1:2). The treatment was carried out under 6.5x magnification on a suction table. A colleague paper conservator, Marina Ruiz-Molina, suggested the use of a velocity-controlled hot-air gun to re-activate remaining adhesive residues and remove them. The tapestry was then stabilized and prepared for display in the galleries. Based on colors she had retrieved from the well-preserved dyes on the reverse, a color-corrected image of the tapestry's obverse was achieved using a spectrophotometer. Minsun created this re-constructed image (on the left) with the aid of Scott Geffert, Senior Imaging Manager, and Chris Heins, Imaging Production Assistant, Imaging Department.

A more complete description can be found on Minsun's blog: <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2019/rescuing-one-hundred-boys-chinese-tapestry-textile-conservation-sticky-tape>





## Regional Dress Acquisitions

In December 2017 the Costume Institute de-accessioned over 600 costumes, textiles, and accessories belonging to their regional dress collection. Those objects were transferred to several departments in the Museum, including Islamic Art, Asian Art, and American Decorative Arts. The entire group was quarantined as a precaution against infestation. After quarantine each piece was carefully examined, documented, and prepared for storage. Kira Osti, Heidi Hilker, and Toma Fichter from the Antonio Ratti Textile Center worked diligently in close consultation with Textile Conservation conservators to complete this project with alacrity and precision. A few highlights can be seen here.

Top: Knit “frog” pouch, Mexico.

Left, top to bottom: Lower edge of wedding robe and detail of embroidery, Pakistan.

Pleated dress and detail of woven pattern, Armenia.

Robe of Ikat-dyed velvet and detail, Central Asia.





Top: Discolored and damaged 1970's slide film.

Bottom: Images after color correction by imaging specialist.

### Digitizing 35mm color slide film

Advances in digital technology have greatly expanded the role of images for both analytical and recording purposes. In the past, 35mm color slide film was used to document a textile's condition and prior conservation work. Although film is no longer used, color slides remain a valuable visual record. Slides, however, are susceptible to change over time, altering in appearance and obscuring original images. The need to digitize previous conservation documentation is growing, both to preserve important information and to better integrate historic and current records. As a result, digitizing color slides before any deterioration occurs has become a priority.

Scanning slides is laborious, requiring expertise in color calibration, and we send our slides to an outside lab specializing in this type of transfer. Due to a limited budget, only a small number of slides have been scanned thus far. More slides in need will be scanned as funds become available.

These images show details from the tapestry *Christ Is Born as Man's Redeemer*, 38.28



# Exhibitions



## *Art of Native America: the Charles and Valerie Diker Collection*

This exhibition marks the first time artworks by Native Americans featured in The Met's American Wing, rather than in the galleries of Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas (AAOA). The 12 textiles included in the exhibition were prepared for exhibition by Yael Rosenfield, former liaison conservator for American Decorative Arts with the assistance of Cristina B. Carr. The challenge here was to design and construct appropriate display mounts for these complex 3-dimensional objects. This exhibition required close collaboration with conservation preparators Preparators from the Department of Object Conservation. Respect for indigenous traditions was a primary consideration in the design of this exhibition.

Top left: Tunic with Leggings, front. L.2018.35.40a-c, ca. 1890, Tlingit, plain weave tapestry with non-horizontal weft, cedar bark, mountain sheep wool, and native-tanned leather. (Viewed in Textile Conservation)

Top right: At the Diker's apartment during packing, reverse.

Bottom: Women's hoods on display mounts.







Above: Photomicrograph of detail of velvet on right at 20x magnification.

Top right: Fragment of brocaded velvet, 16th century 11 3/8 x 22 3/4 in. (28.9 x 57.8 cm). Gift of Nanette B. Kelekian in honor of Olga Raggio, 2002 (2002.494.598)

Bottom right: Giovanni Battista Moroni *Portrait of a Young Woman* ca.1575 Oil on Canvas, 20 3/8 x 16 3/8 in. (51.8 x 41.5 cm) Private Collection.

### ***Moroni, The Riches of Renaissance Portraiture on view at the Frick Collection February 21–June 2, 2019***

This brocaded velvet, included in the Frick Collection's exhibition *Moroni, The Riches of Renaissance Portraiture*, is a mismatched composite of two fragments.

The Department of Textile Conservation continues to explore new applications of digital images. A photomicrograph of a detail at 20x magnification was on the exhibition label and included in the catalogue. It helps to convey the complex techniques and rich materials used in the production of luxury textiles in Italy during the sixteenth century. Lead curator Aimee Ng opened the exhibition's Scholars Day, attended by Cristina Carr and Giulia Chiostrini, and commented on the success of the photomicrograph in drawing the viewer into both the textile and the dress depicted in the *Portrait of a Young Woman* with which the fragment was paired.

Integrating new technology with traditional exhibition presentations seamlessly can be challenging but results in richly rewarding insights for both specialist and non-specialist.

The photomicrograph is also included in Aimee Ng's exhibition overview on the Frick's website. <https://www.frick.org/exhibitions/moroni/video>





Left: Gemma preparing a silk robe for one of the angel figurines.

Right: The Met's beloved tree, a Christmas tradition for the Museum and for many of our visitors.



### Gemma Rossi

Gemma Rossi worked on her first installation of the Met's Christmas tree as a new Museum volunteer in the mid-1980s. This project introduced her to the Department of Textile Conservation, where she continues to create storage mounts for textiles to this day. Gemma's attention to detail and impeccable results are very much appreciated. Her enduring interest in textiles reflects her family's involvement in the silk industry in Bursa, Turkey, beginning in the mid-19th century.

Gemma was joined by Caroline Borderies in 2006, and both play an indispensable role in making storage mounts and preparing the support materials used for display of objects in the galleries.



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# Travel and Research

## France, Germany, and Northern Italy

In 2018, Olha Yarema-Wynar, Associate Textile Conservator, was invited by the Department of Arms and Armor to contribute an essay to an upcoming catalog with the working title *The Lost Armory of Chalcis: Warfare and Defense in the Late Byzantine Aegean*.

The Met owns 15 metal plates of various sizes used to reinforce *brigandines*, a vest-like armor. The plates retain fragments of the textiles which covered the metal surface. These objects were found hidden within 16th century walls of Chalcis, part of the Roman empire, and have not been well studied thus far. As part of her research Olha will analyze textile fibers, some of which were given to her from the collections she visited in Europe. These will be an invaluable source for comparative study.

Olha received a travel grant for this research. She visited the collections of the Musée de l'Armée, Paris; the Bayerisches National Museum, Munich; and the Churburg Castle in Northern Italy.

Right: Brigandine, mid-16th century. Churburg Castle.



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## India

Yael Rosenfield was awarded a grant by the Educational Fund in Memory of Ron McKinney in December 2018. Endowed by Ron's wife Kathy, the Fund is for the exclusive use by the Department of Textile Conservation. Yael, its first recipient, used her grant to support a research trip to India.

The focus of Yael's research is on Indian Printed and Painted textiles (Kalamkari), with an emphasis on textile-making techniques still practiced in India today, and comparisons to similar textiles and their production in the Met's collection. A blog post on the Met's website highlights her former research on block-printing:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/ruminations/2016/indian-block-printed-textiles>

On this trip she concentrated on Kalamkari textiles produced on the Coromandel Coast, which were historically painted, but are now mostly printed. One of Yael's key observations on this trip was that very large blocks were sometimes used, such as on The Met's tree-of-life Kalamkari with a Cypress tree in the center (08.108.3). Over 200 blocks were required for each design of Kalamkari textiles.



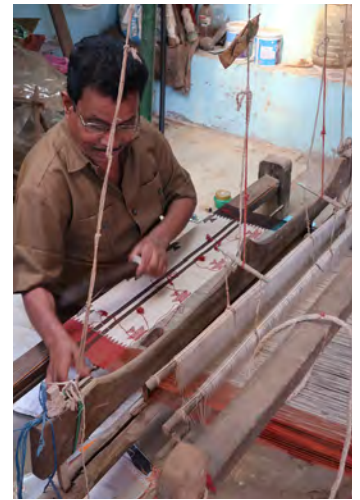


## At the Workshop of Master Block-Carver

In Pedana, Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Gangadhar shows a large paisley printing block, and detail of its intricate carving.

Red natural dye was another focus of this field research. Kotad is a remote village on the Odisha/Chhattisgarh border, where indigenous people from the Panica group have maintained an age-old tradition of dyeing red with *Morinda citrifolia*, a locally grown tree from the madder family. These images document the long and complex dyeing process, which is in danger of extinction.

This trip was featured in *The Times of India* <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/new-yorks-museum-team-visits-dyers-of-kotpad-on-chhattisgarh-odisha-border/articleshow/67408183.cms>



Mordanting of cotton yarn, a difficult fiber to dye. The yarn is soaked in cow-dung paste, then kneaded with the feet

Dyeing cotton skeins with *Morinda citrifolia*

Skeins of yarn drying in the sun. The sun's heat helps the mordant penetrate the cotton fiber

Sri Gobardhan Panica (national awardee) weaving a traditional sari with *Morinda* dyed cotton. Plain-weave, tapestry, supplementary weft, woven on pit loom





Top left: Alexandra (second from left) with Marie Vercauteren of C.R.E.C.I.T. and other colleagues at The Notre-Dame Cathedral in Tournai, Belgium.

Top right: View of Krakow, Poland from Wawel Hill.

Bottom left: Tapestry conservation studio, Tournai, Belgium

Bottom right: Renaissance castle, Pieskowa Scala, Poland.

## Belgium and Poland

In September of 2018, Assistant Conservator Alexandra Barlow traveled to Belgium and Poland to study tapestry conservation methodology. She visited textile conservation laboratories to view, discuss, and document both new practices and traditional techniques for the stabilization, cleaning, and hanging of European tapestries.

In Belgium, she toured tapestry conservation laboratories and collections in Tournai, a historic site for medieval weaving, and The Royal Manufacturers De Wit, a privately owned business that cleans, conserves, and restores tapestries.

In Krakow, Poland Alexandra visited Wawel Royal Castle, a UNESCO world heritage site and one of the most important landmarks in Poland. Her research focused on the history, weaving techniques, and conservation history of sixteenth-century Flemish tapestries commissioned by King Sigismund II Augustus in the years 1550–1560.

She was generously supported by a Met travel grant.



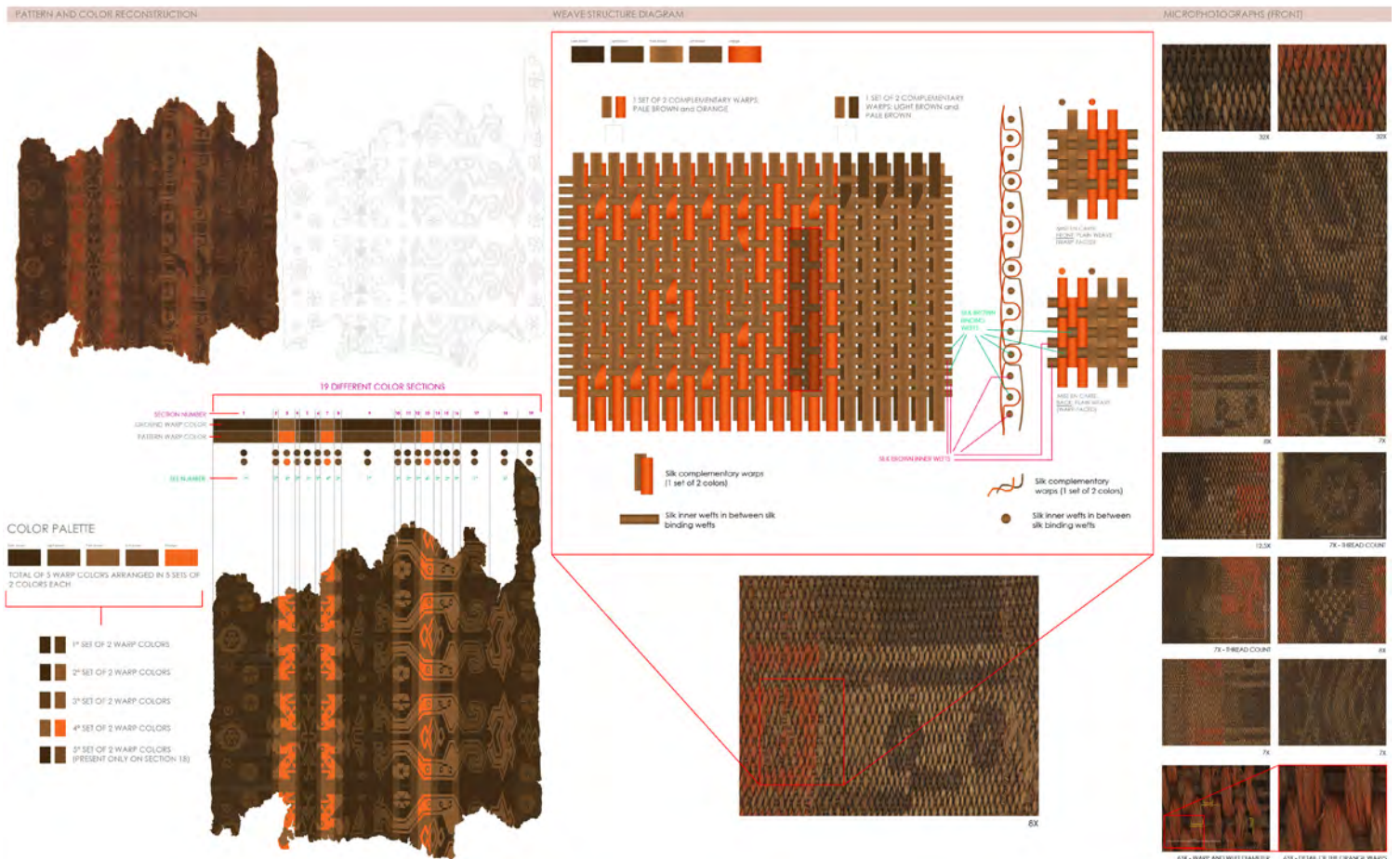
## Martina Ferrari



Martina Ferrari has been an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the department this past year and has been awarded a 2nd year to continue her research. The focus of Martina Ferrari's research is on the digital rendering of compound weave structures of textiles in the Met's collection. The goal of the project is to provide a complete technical analysis of textiles which can be used for comparative study, using computer-aided design technology to illustrate their weave structure.

The vector drawing software AutoCAD®, photo-editing software, and microphotography are useful tools in developing digital renderings of the original color palette and weave structure in cross-section and axonometric view.

These diagrams have clear didactic value and the potential to become part of a database that can be shared on institutional and social media platforms, accessible to both specialist and non-specialist. Understanding weave structure through these diagrams can promote scholarly discussion, comparative analysis, and better understanding of textiles with a questionable attributions. Martina was awarded a second year of funding in March of this year. We are thrilled that she will continue her research within our department until August 2020.



Above: A digital rendering of 2002.559, the oldest Chinese textiles in the Museum's collection.



## Sample A at three different stages of testing – y-axis displacement



Pulled 2.8mm



Pulled 10.9mm



Pulled 19.5mm



## Hannah Sutherland

Hannah Sutherland, has recently started work on the experimental phase of her year-long research project focusing on conservation stitching. Before coming to the United States, Hannah worked on tapestry conservation with Historic Royal Palaces in London and previously trained at the Centre for Textile Conservation, University of Glasgow. The team at the CTC have been looking into the impact of stress on hanging tapestries since 2007. It is their research which Hannah built upon during her 2016 dissertation and informs her current work.

Hannah has been working with Kisook Suh in Textile Conservation and Sean Cormier, Associate Professor of Textile Development and Marketing at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Access to FIT's tensile testing equipment allows Hannah to examine how strain spreads across the surface of a stitched textile when it is hanging on display. She hopes that the answers to this question and others will help promote 'best practice' in regards to conservation stitching and the longevity of precious textile objects while on vertical display.



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### **Support the Department of Textile Conservation**

With steadfast support from our friends, The Met's Department of Textile Conservation can continue to thrive and be a critical resource for the preservation of works of art as well as a vibrant center for research.

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To learn more about how you can become involved and support this important work at The Met, please contact: Daphne Birdsey, Deputy Chief Development Officer, at 212 396 5340 or [mailto: daphne.birdsey@metmuseum.org](mailto:daphne.birdsey@metmuseum.org)

You may also contribute online at:

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Click on 'Provide additional information about your gift' and note 'For Department of Textile Conservation'.

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