
Department of Textile Conservation Newsletter

Fall 2021 Volume 5

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Introduction

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

As the effects of the pandemic began to abate, we gradually resumed our museum activities. Conservators returned to the lab on a rotating basis beginning late summer 2020 observing strict daily occupancy limits imposed by The Met's Re-opening Team. Priority projects included completing installation of Making the Met and the Art for the Community exhibitions celebrating The Museum's 150th anniversary.

Work on the King Arthur tapestry continued with ongoing digital initiatives documenting this major conservation campaign. We gradually resumed our museum activities with overdue rotations in the Islamic Galleries including several of the largest carpets in The Met's collection an already complex undertaking requiring the coordination of a large team across departments further complicated by strict social distancing limits.

Rotations in the new British Galleries included 18th-century embroidered waistcoat panels brilliantly displayed on free-hanging Plexiglas mounts.

During the summer of 2021 the TC wet lab was transformed into a temporary photo studio by Imaging for a major campaign to photograph over 70 kimonos for the catalogue of an upcoming exhibition featuring kimonos from the John C. Weber collection. Once this project was completed, a temporary overhead rig was installed for the photography of oversized textiles and tapestries from several curatorial departments.

Integrated Pest Management, "IPM" activities are an official addition to our daily schedules. Re-installation of magnificent Savonnerie carpets in the Wrightsman Galleries involved low-suction vacuuming following anoxic treatment. In addition to anoxic treatment, a new freezer facility will allow low-temperature treatment on many carpets, tapestries, and other textiles. Pre-treatment and Post-treatment rooms accommodate the increased number of textiles requiring attention.

THE
MET

Introduction

“Work-from-Home” digital initiatives resulting from the Pandemic allowed us to share our conservation projects with colleagues in The Met and beyond. The first virtual Visiting Committee meeting was an opportunity to present our current projects. British documentary filmmaker Ian Denyer was our special guest; he spoke about his work for the BBC and PBS. Ian was commissioned by The Met to document our museum’s 150th anniversary, and his passion for textiles was evident in the great interest he took in the work of the Department of Textile Conservation. Collaborative virtual events with ESDA and Medieval Art and The Cloisters (with The Met’s Development Department) brought to life essential textile treatments highlighting conservation of a rare renaissance velvet, as well as the Mortlake and King Arthur tapestries. Open discussion on the difference between conservation and restoration treatments underlined the key roles of both curators and conservators in the decision-making process.

Virtual conservation conferences (AIC, ICON, ICOM), Museum workshops, and initiatives reflecting DEIA programming, including ARIAH internships, have become integral to our educational and professional development. In the Spring of 2021, the Department hosted two virtual colloquia-- the first focused on the special exhibition *Revisiting Art for the Community*. The second colloquia featured the artist Marie Watt who spoke about her work the *Art of Native America* exhibition

Thanks to collaborative efforts with our Digital Media colleagues, we are so pleased to have a departmental landing page on The Met’s website providing a centralized location for our work, past, present, and future. The department begun work on a visual glossary featuring photomicrographs of textiles from The Met’s diverse collection. We have entered into an exciting period with new energy and ideas, including the recent in-person event in collaboration with The Department of Scientific Research.

With a fully open museum, we look forward to meeting up in corridors, in the cafeteria, at the Department— everywhere! We have missed you all!

Janina

Visiting Committee Event

Textile Conservation’s wet lab was transformed for a collaborative event with @MetScience for both departments’ Visiting Committees. Kristine Kamiya presented her research on the construction and surface design techniques in this collection of modern and historic kimono, Scientists Nobuko Shibayama and Maria Mieites Alonso shared the results of their dye analysis, and Monika Bincsik, curator in the Department of Asian Art, gave a brief overview of the upcoming exhibition, *Kimono Style: The John C. Weber Collection* opening June 2022. The exhibition publication will include a glossary with photomicrographs of textile techniques found in this collection of kimono.



Photomicrograph, 10x: Unlined summer robe (hitoe) with cormorant-fishing design
Edo period (1615–1868), early 19th century
Silk crepe (chijimi), paste resist dyed (yūzen) and stencil dyed dots (kata-kanoko), silk and couched gold thread embroidery, hand-painted details.
Gift of John C. Weber, 2019.
MMA 2019.16.1



Conservation Projects



MMA 32.130.3a; 47.101.4

Work on The Met Cloisters Heroes Tapestries Continues During the Pandemic

The major conservation campaign of The Cloisters Heroes Tapestries continues despite an unexpected interruption due to the pandemic. Conservation treatment of *King Arthur*, the first tapestry of the series, was paused from mid-March until re-opening of the Museum to its staff in September 2020. With restricted access to the Museum, the conservation team carried on treatment and documentation of the tapestry in close communication with curators through both in-person and virtual meetings.

During the pause, the team of conservators, Kathrin Colburn, Kisook Suh, and Anna Szalecki worked with Janina Poskrobsko to continue the project remotely focusing on extensive conservation documentation. However, having to postpone completion of the tapestry's conservation treatment was inevitable. With the heroic effort of project curator, Barbara D. Boehm, and additional generosity from Jane and Michael Horvitz who have supported the treatment of the tapestry from its beginning, an extended treatment proposal was accepted. The *King Arthur* tapestry is now expected to be reinstalled at The Cloisters in the spring of 2022.

In February 2021, a virtual presentation of the King Arthur project was shared with about 100 guests. These included members of the Friends of The Met, and the Visiting Committees of the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters and the Department of Textile Conservation. The presentation and discussion on the history and conservation of *King Arthur* was organized by the Development Department in collaboration with both departments.

The unprecedented challenges of the pandemic opened new channels for communication allowing us to share this wonderful project with an even wider audience. As our work schedule returns to normal, we are once again enjoying rewarding in person discussions in front of the *King Arthur* tapestry with our colleagues.

Exhibitions



Gallery view of the exhibition in the Fuentidueña Chapel



Curator Julia Perratore, research assistant Amelia Roché Hyde, and designer Daniel Kershaw during the installation of the textiles, which were prepared by Kathrin Colburn and Julia Carlson for the exhibition.

The Met Cloisters, Spain, 1000-1200: Art at the Frontiers of Faith

The exhibition at The Met Cloisters, *Spain, 1000-1200: Art at the Frontiers of Faith*, is on view in the Fuentidueña Chapel. The imposing architecture and incorporated artwork in this gallery provide the ideal setting for a show that celebrates the diversity of Spanish medieval art. The textiles on view, with their use of precious materials, complex weave structures, and patterns, add to the splendor of this exquisite exhibit. Halfway through the show, which closes on February 13, 2022, the textiles on display were rotated with other works.

In conjunction with the exhibition, The Met and the International Center of Medieval Art organized a textile-focused Virtual Scholar's Event. The exhibition's curator Julia Perratore gave an overview of the textiles on display, and Janina Poskrobko presented on technical features of Iberian textiles from the Met's collection. María Judith Feliciano, an independent scholar, shared her research on interpretive possibilities of the textiles on view.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2021/spain-show-cloisters>



Obverse and reverse of a fragment from the Shrine of San Librada, Sigüenza Cathedral, Spain
First half 12th century
Lampas; silk, metal wrapped thread
17 x 13 in. (43.2 x 33 cm)
W. 12 in. (30.5 cm)
Funds from various donors, 1958
MMA 58.85.2

Exhibitions



Andrea Achi, curator, and Andrew Winslow, technician, laying out textiles on the deck of the display case; Byzantine Egyptian Gallery 302



The textile with two monastic men is exhibited in its collectors' mount, reflecting part of the objects' many years in Kelekian's collection.

Painting of two monastic men

Paint on linen

Byzantine Egypt, 5th – 6th century

17 5/16 x 12 13/16 in. (44 x 32.5 cm)

Bequest of Nanette R. Kelekian, 2020

MMA 2021.37.12

The Good Life: Collecting Late Antique Art at The Met

Throughout the past two decades, The Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters received numerous works of art from the late Nanette R. Kelekian, a generous benefactor of the Museum. A selection of Kelekian's gifts can be viewed in the exhibition *The Good Life: Collecting Late Antique Art at The Met*, including a rare late antique painting on linen depicting two Christian holy men. Also on display are vibrant textiles from the George F. Baker gift of 1890 and a fragment of a hanging depicting Euthenia in a garden, gifted by Mr. and Mrs. Spear in 1984.

Kathrin Colburn worked with curator Andrea Achi to select the textiles on view, which will rotate with other works every six months until the show closes in May 2023.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2021/good-life-collecting-late-antique-art>

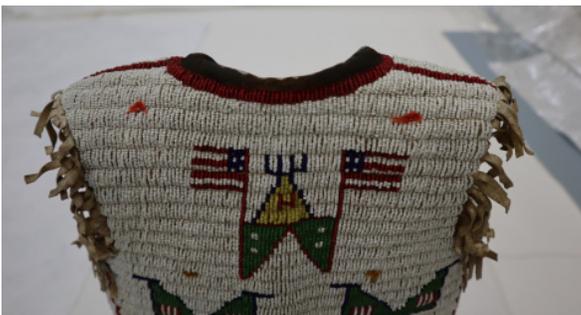


Textiles from the George F. Baker gift of 1890

Exhibitions



MMA L.2021.3.9



MMA 2020.315.1

Art of Native America

For the 2020 / 2021 rotation in *Art of Native America: The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection*, Alexandra Barlow and Cristina Balloffet Carr worked collaboratively with our colleagues in the American Wing, Objects Conservation, and the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing to conserve, mount, and install works in the gallery. An early 20th century Seminole Man's shirt required stabilization of open seams, humidification, and a custom mount carved of Ethafoam to bring the garment to life. The shirt is made in the traditional Seminole technique of patchwork with strips of small, pieced designs stitched together into the shape of the shirt.

Treatment of the textile components of a ca. 1890 Lakota infant's vest involved both the commonly used conservation technique of an overlay to secure fragile threads at the neckline and a considered decision to remove deteriorating original ribbons from the vest. Following discussion with the curator, it was decided to remove the ribbons in a way that would still honor the intention of the individual who originally stitched them in place. Conservators created a small custom pouch to house the ribbons, attaching it to the inside lining of the vest on its left side. Invisible to visitors to the gallery, it is still physically connected to the object.

Rotations also included the rotation of two Navajo (Diné) blankets and a recent acquisition by the contemporary artist Marie Watt.



Exhibitions

Japan: A History of Style

Each of the ten rooms that make up the Arts of Japan Galleries features a distinct genre, school, or style, representing an array of works in nearly every medium, from ancient times to the present. Four modern kimono will be displayed during the exhibition period. Gifts of Sue Cassidy Clark, in memory of Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, 2013.

On view at The Met Fifth Avenue in **Galleries 223–232**



Kimono with Design of Pines, Plum, and Bamboo (Shōchikubai)
Figured silk (Damask) with woven bamboo motif; hand-painted pines in pigment and gold, embroidered plum crests
Second quarter of the 20th century
MMA 2013.510.4



Kimono with Pines and Mist
Hand-painted and paste-resist dyed with painted gold accents on silk crepe
Second quarter of the 20th century
MMA 2013.510.6



Exhibitions



The Bodhisattvas of Wisdom, Compassion, and Power

A large thangka, complete with its fabric borders of Avalokiteshvara, a compassionate protector, who helps reveal the true nature of reality, is displayed in the exhibition, *The Bodhisattvas of Wisdom, Compassion, and Power*. Conservation was conducted on this thangka's textile components, by former colleague Midori Sato now Conservator Emerita. Upgrading materials and methods of display are important aspects of textile conservators' responsibilities. The previous mount was made with two sheets of Plexiglas joined in the center creating a visual disruption. Advances in new technology and manufacturing allows us to use one full sheet of Plexiglas with an uninterrupted view. Inconspicuous hardware provides a full view of the thangka. This thangka has an unsupported canvas with a large pigment-painted surface requiring careful coordination in handling to prevent damage.

This exhibition, by the Department of Asian Art, presents three bodhisattvas embraced across the Himalayas. On view at The Met Fifth Avenue in **Gallery 251**.

Thangka, *The Wrathful Protector Mahakala, Tantric Protective Form of Avalokiteshvara*
Distemper on cloth
Tibet, early 18th century
Purchase, Florance Waterbury Bequest, 1969
MMA 69.72

Exhibitions



Cope made for Antonio Barberini (1607 – 1671), Grand Prior of Rome, Italy, 1623 – 1628 Silk, metal threads, H.52 1/2" x W. 119", Gift of Walter Jennings, 1911 MMA 11.101



Preparation of the cope mount: a custom-built mount was designed with adjustable curved Plexiglas sides padded with archival material

Art for the Community

The exhibition *Art for the Community*, October 31, 2020 – June 27, 2021, was organized in honor of The Met's 150th anniversary and focused on a series of exhibitions organized by the Museum between 1933 and 1942. These so-called "Neighborhood Circulating Exhibitions" were designed to share selections from the Museum's textile collections in a series of small, traveling exhibition displayed in high schools, public libraries, and other public institutions across the five boroughs.

Many of the 17th - 18th century European textiles included in the "Neighborhood Circulating Exhibitions" were displayed along with related documents from The Met's archives, including photographs of the travelling exhibitions in their locations.

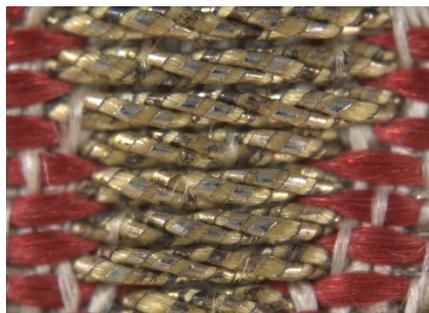
A cope made for Antonio Barberini, Grand Prior of Rome (1623-1628) was the center piece of the exhibition. The Barberini family emblems, the bee and the radiant sun, appear in the design and the family's coats of arms can be seen at the outer edges of the orphrey.

The cope is constructed from a sumptuous silk lampas manufactured in Italy in the first half of the 17th century. Three types of metal threads were used in the weaving.

In preparation for display, Giulia Chiostrini focused the conservation treatment on stabilizing the damaged lampas weave. A cotton underlay was inserted between the historic textile and the original lining and the damaged threads were secured with couching stitches using fine thread. In collaboration with Daniel Kershaw, Museum Senior Designer, an adjustable metal A-frame with curved Plexiglas sides was created to support the heavy vestment weighing about 5 kg. The mount was covered with polyester felt and fabric for display.



Photomicrograph Martina Ferrari
Magnification 16x
detail of silver pair of wire lance



Photomicrograph Martina Ferrari
Magnification 16x
detail of silver gilt wrapped silk thread.



Photomicrograph Martina Ferrari
Magnification 16x
detail of silver gilt three plied Z wrapped silk thread

Recent Acquisitions

Islamic Art Shrub Carpet Fragment

In honor of the Met's 150th anniversary, Marshall and Marilyn R. Wolf gifted the Museum a seventeenth-century carpet fragment. Most likely woven in Khurasan, Iran, the title "shrub" carpet refers to the family of "vase" or "garden" carpets, that were significant in Persian culture. On this fragment, scrolling vines and naturalistic flowers are arranged around a central vase. As often happens with carpets, the fragment consists of four individual pieces that were once each part of the main-field of a magnificent, much larger carpet. The fragment was recently conserved and prepared for display in the department and can be seen in Gallery 462 installed in a gallery installation mount.



MMA 2019.404



Warp and weft are cotton and the wool pile is done in an asymmetrical knot.

Recent Acquisitions



MMA 2021.32

Islamic Art Textile Length with Seated Deer and Floral Blossoms Rahul Jain

At the beginning of 2021, The Department of Islamic Art acquired a textile by the artist Rahul Jain. Jain is a well-known scholar, researcher, author, historian, and designer of Indian textiles. This loom-width, ten-foot long textile was woven in 2018 at Jain's workshop in Varanasi, India. The design motifs depicted are evenly spaced seated deer and blossoms with a Mughal art-inspired pattern repeat, that is part of a revival moment in New Delhi, India.

It is woven in 3/1 twill with extra-weft patterning created by silver metal-wrapped threads and silk in multiple colors. ASHA, the textile workshop in Varanasi where this textile was produced, specializes in Indo-Iranian weaving techniques woven on traditional Indian drawlooms.

This is the first textile from Jain's workshop to enter The Met's collection.

Asian Art Temple Hanging with Scenes from the *Bhagavata* *Purana and the Ramayana*

Purchased by the Department of Asian Art, this temple hanging with nineteen narrative registers has a 17th century Assamese translation of Sanskrit texts recounting youthful escapades of Lord Krishna. The combination of the sacred narrative and imagery imbue the textile with a heightened sanctity. The textile represents one of the best-preserved examples of a rare genre of woven silks (possibly tussah) in a lampas structure (two sets of warps & wefts: ground/foundation woven in plain weave; pattern woven in an extended plain weave) both selvages are visible.



Northeast India (Assam), early 17th century
Richard Greenbaum Fund, 2020
MMA 2020.398

Recent Acquisitions

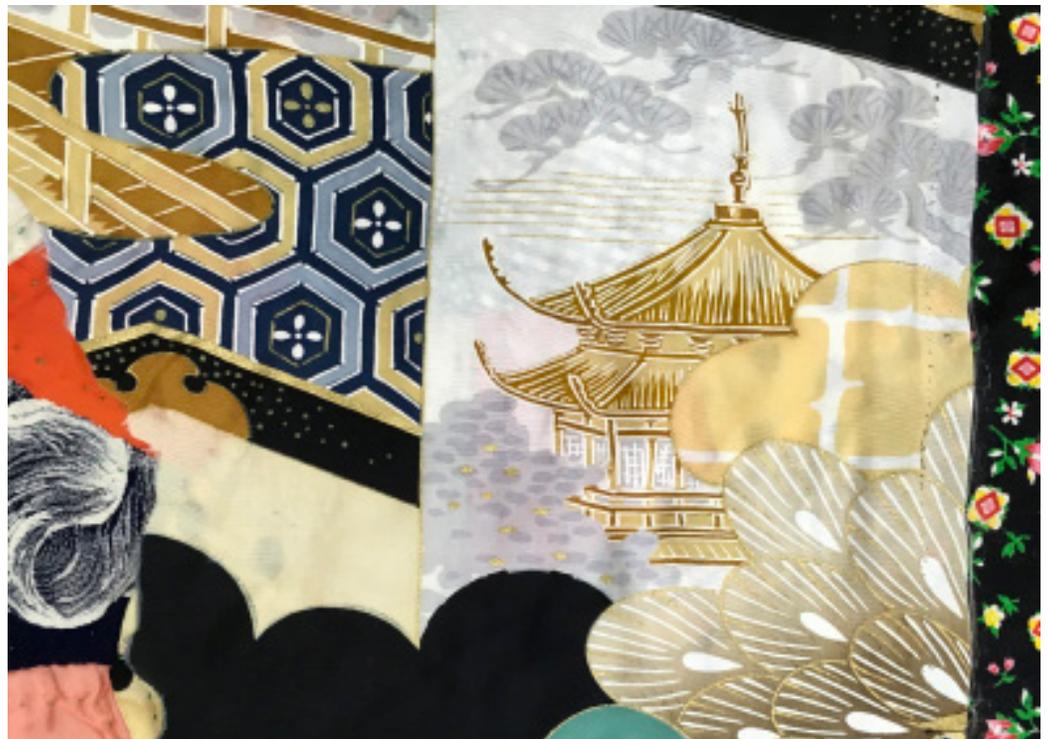


Borne by the River, 2017
Sanford Biggers (American, born Los Angeles, California, 1970)
Gift of Amy and Alex Rotter, 2020
MMA 2020.284

Modern & Contemporary Art *Borne by the River* Sanford Biggers

This quilt-based work by Sanford Biggers, acquired by the Department of Modern & Contemporary Art, is a composition of antique quilts, quilt fragments and kimono fabric that form the artist's canvas for what he refers to as a painting. Many of his quilt fragments are the handwork of the quilters of Gee's Bend. There are twenty-one Gee's Bend quilts in the collection many of which were featured in *History Refused to Die*: Highlights from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation Gift.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2018/history-refused-to-die>



Recent Acquisitions



American Wing *Untitled (Dream Catcher)* Marie Watt

On display at the entrance to *Art of Native America: The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection* is a work by the contemporary Native American artist Marie Watt (Seneca). *Untitled (Dream Catcher)* is made from reclaimed blankets, cut into pieces and reconfigured into a spiral design. The original satin bindings from the blankets drape across the face of the work in long loops attached at the top.

The work was constructed collectively as part of a sewing circle organized by the artist. The physical signs of time and wear are visible on the original blankets stitched together by those many hands. This layered history of both the blankets' past use and present form is part of the artist's vision and is apparent in the details of the pieced and quilted textile.

In preparation for exhibit, conservators had the opportunity to meet with Marie Watt and The Met's Associate Curator of Native American Art, Patricia Marroquin Norby, to discuss with the artist her vision for the long-term preservation of the work. This conversation sparked inspiration for a public presentation as part of our 3rd annual Textile Conservation Colloquium. On June 25, 2021, Marie Watt was one of our special guest speakers in conversation with conservators Alexandra Barlow and Cristina Balloffet Carr. A video recording of this presentation is available to view and can be found on the Department of Textile Conservation landing page.

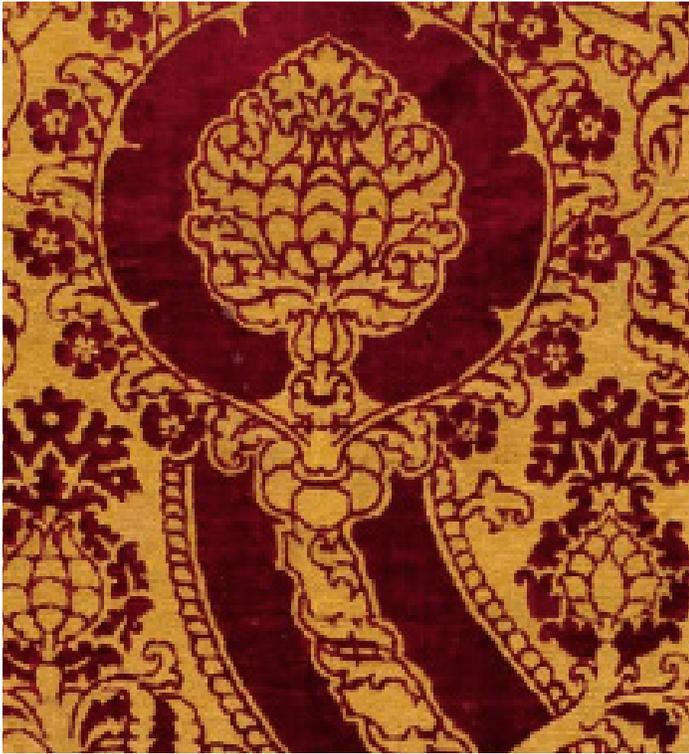
On view at The Met Fifth Avenue in **Gallery 746**.



MMA 2021.46



Virtual Events



MMA 67.55.101

Costly Gold: The Tudors' Italian Velvets

In May 2020, The Departments of Textile Conservation and European Sculpture and Decorative Arts co-hosted a virtual event, *Costly Gold: The Tudors' Italian Velvets* for Friends of ESDA and Textile Conservation's Visiting Committee. Elizabeth Cleland, Curator in ESDA, discussed the Tudors' Courts and their love of sumptuous Italian velvets. Giulia Chiostrini focused on materials and techniques employed in the weaving of a magnificent velvet from the Met's collection. She also described the conservation treatment involved in preparing this textile for an upcoming exhibition organized by Curator Elizabeth Cleland, *Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England*, scheduled for opening in fall 2022.



Photomicrograph Giulia Chiostrini
Magnification 20x

Virtual Events

Virtual Tour of the Department of Textile Conservation

We are always happy to share our work and during the pandemic missed the visits of students in various programs.

Once settled into the reality of virtual events, we collaborated with The Met's Education Department to organize an outreach program for college students. In February 2021, Kisook Suh and Giulia Chiostrini hosted the first virtual tour of the lab for a group of FIT students accompanied by their professor Dr. Preeti Arya. The students were members of the student chapter of AATCC (American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists). The invitation was extended to current participants in The Met's college internship program.

Elizabeth Perkins and Chloe Lovelace from the Education Department began the event with an overview of The Met's programs. Kisook and Giulia followed with a virtual tour of the lab. Using a tablet, they presented several textiles undergoing treatment and the sophisticated equipment and facilities which enable us to conduct in depth examination, documentation, treatment, and preparation of textiles for exhibition.

Thanks to Shar-Lyn Tai's technical assistance, we were able to accommodate a large group of students in a virtual space. The benefits and potential of virtual events were evident in the interesting Q&A session that ended the tour.



In Memorium



Ronnee Barnett

Ronnee was a member of the DTC from 1991 to 2016. She participated in numerous medieval tapestry projects including the conservation of the *Courtiers in a Rose Garden* series, of which we have three in The Met's collection.

An accomplished textile conservator, Ronnee's exceptional reweaving skills and her gifted eye for matching yarns with the worn texture and muted colors of the original are especially apparent in her work. She was also a keen gardener and animal lover. She continues to be dearly missed.

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.

www.pinterest.com/mettextileconservation

www.instagram.com/mettextileconservation

To learn more about how you can become involved and support this important work at The Met, please contact: Jennifer Brown, Deputy Chief Development Officer of Individual Giving at 212-650-2366 or email to Jennifer.Brown@metmuseum.org

You may also contribute online at:

<https://secure.metmuseum.org/secure/donation/donate>

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

**The Metropolitan
Museum of Art**

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