V&A Conservation Journal April 1998

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The cover shows
*'Bashaw, 1831-34'* by Matthew Coles Wyatt
Museum No. A.4-1960, a potential "star" of the New British Galleries
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# Conservation Department areas of interest

*Jonathan Ashley-Smith,* risk analysis
*Alison Richmond,* ethics, co-ordination of interns

*Alan Cummings,* paintings conservation
*Helen Jones,* archaeological conservation

*Graham Martin,* preventive conservation, analytical chemistry
*Alice Rymill,* library, administration
*Carl Taylor,* computer systems, digital media
*Hannah Eastwood,* microscopy & paint analysis
*Brenda Keneghan,* polymers
*Boris Pretzel,* materials & environment, colour and light
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*David Ford,* particulate monitoring, special projects

*Helen Shenton,* book conservation, albums & condition surveys

*Jane Rutherston,* 19th and 20th century books and albums
*Bridget Mitchell,* Dickens manuscripts, western bindings post 1500
*Stefania Signorello,* book conservation

*Pauline Webber,* Far Eastern & Asian art, wallpapers
*Alison Norton,* posters, jigsaw puzzles
*Michael Wheeler,* Indian art, photographs, contemporary works of art on paper
*Merryl Huxtable,* wallpapers, vellum manuscripts
*Victoria Button,* prints (16th-20th century), water marks
*Alan Derbyshire,* portrait miniatures & Raphael cartoons
*Elizabeth Martin,* photographs
*Chris Gingell,* storage of archival material
*Simon Fleury,* book cradles and new mount designs
*Clair Battisson,* manual of mounting techiniques
*Danny Norman,* designing graphics, mounting techniques

*Nicola Costaras,* paintings
*Katharine Donaldson,* frames

*Lynda Hillyer,* Indian textiles, archaeological textiles, adhesives
*Albertina Cogram,* tapestries
*Val Blyth,* tapestries, carpets, insect pest management
*Derek Balfour,* upholstery & furnishing techniques
*Anne Amos,* Far Eastern & Central Asian textiles
*Marion Kite,* organic materials
*Audrey Hill,* mounting costume & reproduction accessories
*Susana Hunter,* flat textiles

*Abigail Wright,* administration, accounts

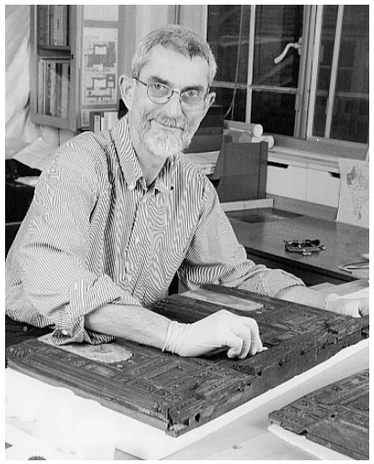
*Richard Cook,* sculpture (plaster, wood, terracotta, stone, ivory & polychromy)
*Alexandra Kosinova,* polchromy, wood
*Charlotte Hubbard,* wood, terracotta, stone & polychromy

*Diana Heath,* jewellery, precious and base metals, ironwork, bronzes
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*Albert Neher,* furniture, marquetry, Victorian furniture
*Tim Miller,* old furniture
*Christine Powell,* gilding, historic techniques & materials
*Tim Hayes,* English furniture, leather
*Nigel Bamforth,* Euro-indian furniture

*Victoria Oakley,* ceramics, glass deterioration, enamels, wax
*Juanita Navarro,* ceramics, glass & enamels
*Fi Jordan,* ceramics, glass & enamels

# New Staff



*Nigel Bamforth*
Furniture Conservator, Furniture and Woodwork Conservation

An escape and career change from the fashion industry allowed me to seek new horizons in furniture restoration. After formal training at Buckinghamshire College I was able to access the various opportunities available for a career in furniture and wood restoration.

The experience I gained working for a restorer and as a conservation volunteer at Hampton Court allowed me to evaluate the differing approaches between restoration and conservation, and to confirm my interest in museum conservation.

I was fortunate to be accepted as a V&A Intern in the Furniture and Woodwork Department. This unique time, given to me by the Museum, was spent absorbing (like a sponge) lectures, practicals and visits whilst gaining an understanding of museum life.

I have now joined the Museum at a turning point in its life: the preparation for the British Galleries project and the twenty-first century. My work commenced with condition reporting the objects, the diversity of which was a great source of wonderment to me! My contractual post is for both British Gallery and Indian objects. The latter encompass various crafts and materials that reflect my current research interest in Anglo-Indian furniture. It is most rewarding to research the crafts and cultures, and thus gain an understanding of the ethnological methods and origins of these objects which is beneficial to their conservation treatment.

It is the willingness of the conservation studios to share and impart their knowledge, and the friendship among my colleagues and students, which makes life at the V&A so rewarding.



*Hannah Eastwood*
Conservation Scientist, Conservation Science Group.

I completed my three-year MA in Conservation Science (Identification of Materials) on the RCA/V&A Conservation Course in the summer of 1997. My aim was to learn the skills required for the accurate identification of pigments and timber, mainly through microscopy techniques, as well as to develop the knowledge and understanding of artists' techniques that is necessary to interpret the information that is revealed by the microscope. Coming from a Biological Sciences background, this proved a challenge! Jo Darrah, Senior Conservation Scientist, generously provided teaching and support throughout my training.

Over the three years I sampled (literally!) a diverse range of objects from the V&A's collections. These included works of art from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, notably Lord Leighton's 'spirit frescoes', Late Gothic German polychrome sculpture and decorated furniture which was exhibited in the William Morris exhibition.

For my final year project I dipped into the world of nineteenth century oil painting materials and techniques by studying works by Richard Redgrave (1804 - 1888). He was not only an important figure in the history of the V&A, but also in the history of the conservation profession. My first task as a member of the Science Group is to undertake the technical analysis of objects intended for the British Galleries project. I will be working alongside my colleagues in the conservation science laboratory. I look forward to building on the skills that I acquired throughout my MA, and also dealing with the demands of working in a busy conservation science laboratory.



# Editorial - British Galleries

*Nick Umney,*
Project Manager, British Galleries Project

This journal is but one sign of the willingness and desire of the Department to share information with others. Another recent sign has been the creation of a huge database of conservation information about the condition and treatment needs of thousands of objects being relocated as part of the British Galleries project described by Nick Humphrey. His article creates for us a glowing vision, but one that will take around 150,000 hours of conservation time alone to complete over the next four years. This will be a superb achievement. It will also be hard work and sometimes frustrating. Along with all this hard work will come some wonderful opportunities for personal and professional development, teamwork, training, partnership building, and research.

The conservation condition assessment, itself an impressive piece of team work carried out to help the Museum plan this enormous venture, provides an example of the kind of collaboration that will be needed for this project. A successful project is one which is delivered on time, on budget, to critical acclaim *and* without damaging our ability to work together in the future. We should remember that in addition to the traditional three criteria for managing projects - schedule, cost and quality - there is a fourth and equally important factor - people. The complexity of the British Galleries Project will see many different groups of people working together, sometimes in new ways, and it will be very much our ability to work together and to synthesise our various views of the project that will determine our ultimate success.

The next steps for conservation involve preparation of objects currently on display for relocation elsewhere; either into storage, or returned to their owners, or on temporary redisplay in the Museum, or on loan; so that as far as possible they can be available for public access while the galleries are closed. Some of the objects will be moved by Museum staff, some by a relocation contractor. Every step in the process will have been agreed by all those affected before it happens in August. This is accompanied by a great deal of related activity elsewhere in the Museum. A new building is being erected off site to enhance our storage capacity. Sculpture Collection is clearing a large part of its existing display space to provide a space for temporary redisplay and prototyping of new ideas for the British Galleries. While this is going on, Conservation will begin preparing objects for redisplay, for photography to meet publication needs, and for the interpretive devices that will be used in the new galleries. The activities of the Department extend well beyond this. Conservation is working with the Design Team to develop an environment and display policy, and strategies for rotation of objects on display, as well as researching and developing new methods to enhance the protection of objects on open display, and carrying out formal risk assessments on the design. Scientific and technical analysis of objects and period rooms and testing of materials for use in displays is also required.

Three separate gallery teams working with thirteen collections and ten conservation sections, plus photographers, technical services and others, means that a great deal of communication will need to take place between us. As I write this, systems for the British Galleries are going in that will allow us all to have access to the same information. This technology is very necessary, but it is not, in itself, a sufficient condition for effectiveness and harmony. Application of the huge diversity of skills, knowledge and experience required to make this project happen necessarily brings together people who are conditioned to see things differently. To be truly effective we all need the humility and reverence to recognize our own perceptual limitations, and to appreciate the rich resources available through the hearts and minds of other human beings. Is it logical that two people can disagree and that both can be right ? It's not logical, it's psychological - and it's very real. If we can value the difference in our perceptions and give credence to the possibility that life is not a dichotomous 'either/or', that there is almost always a third alternative, we will be able to transcend the limits of our conditioning. By doing this we will increase our own self awareness and we will free up energy, that might have been used in defending a particular position, for more creative and productive use.

# The New British Galleries at the V&A

*Nicholas Humphrey*
Coordinator of the Tudor and Stuart Gallery Team, British Galleries Project.

The renovation of the British Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum is the single largest display project undertaken by the Museum for fifty years. The fifteen galleries involved, including narrow back rooms currently used as furniture stores, are themselves the size of many substantial museums and cover roughly 10% of the Museum's entire display space. Access to all floors of the Museum will be dramatically increased by the introduction of two new lifts, one at each end of the galleries. Nearly 3,000 objects will be displayed, representing every aspect of the Museum's wide-ranging collection. The difficulties of renovating existing museum space and the challenge of presenting such a wide range of objects have contributed to the high cost of the project - around £32m - a large part of which is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Museum has set itself a tight schedule: to close the current galleries in July 1998, and to reopen them at the end of 2001. The aim of this article is to outline some of the distinctive qualities of these ambitious new galleries, and how those characteristics are being pursued through the design process.

How will our new British Galleries be different? Expertise in objects may be taken for granted in the V&A. What we know less about, and yet know to be crucial to the success of these galleries, is our audiences. They are certainly varied, from tourist visitors who may speak no English to school children and family groups, as well as specialists and students. Audience research into the ways museum visitors learn is being carried out, and the results fed back into the design process by educators working on three gallery teams. We are particularly interested in responses to the first phase of the new V&A Silver Galleries, opened to great acclaim in 1996. What is well established is that some people prefer to learn in museums from a practical "hands-on" approach while others are more interested in starting from a theory and applying it. Traditionally the V&A has presented displays for analytical learners - those who learn by thinking and watching, and who look for facts and intellectual comprehension - but has offered less for others, such as those who like to try things out for themselves or who look for personal meanings in objects. The new Galleries will attempt to provide for all learning styles.

We want to create galleries which are beautiful and welcoming, a place for enjoyment and learning. For such

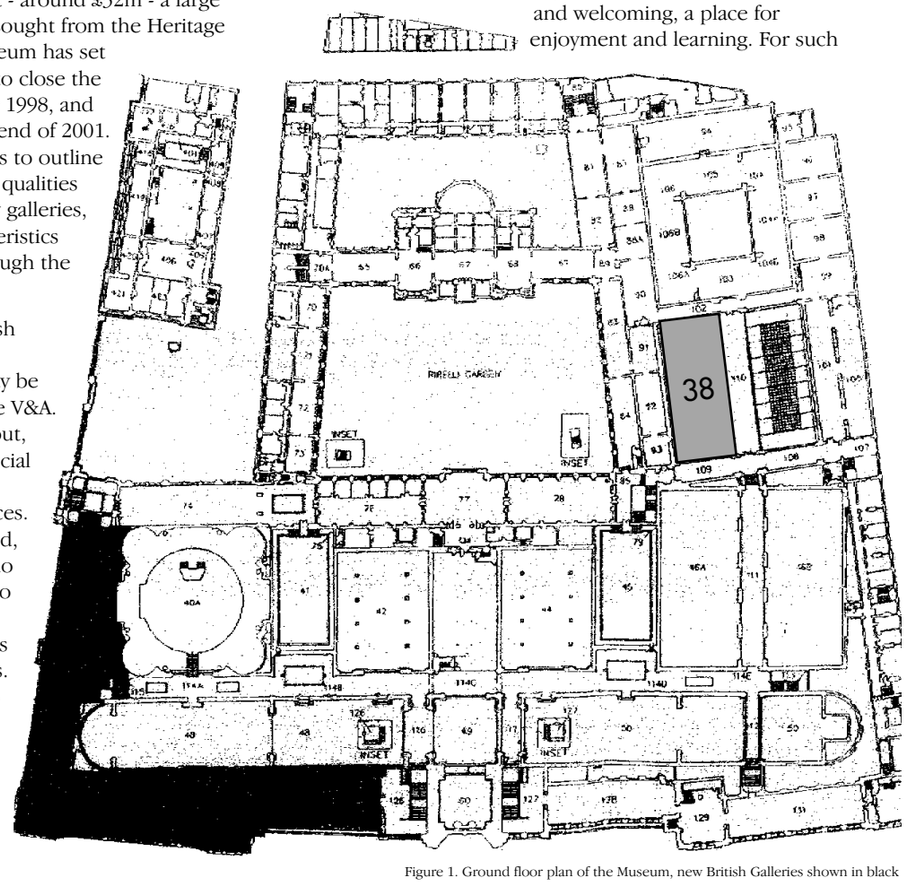



Figure 1. Ground floor plan of the Museum, new British Galleries shown in black







Photography by Anna Hillcoat-Imanishi

Figure 2. Alok Kumar and colleague in the conservation studio of the Mehangarh Museum Trust.

carrying the ceremonial sword of the assistant museum director.

Jaisalmer had no direct museological connection, but here I learned how miniatures are traditionally kept on display in private houses. In one of the *havelis* (houses with a courtyard dating back to the 16th century), miniatures were let into the plaster of the wall and covered with a pane of glass with an ornamental plaster frame.

In Udaipur I had no letter of introduction and could therefore not see behind the scenes of the City Palace Museum, which I deeply regretted. I visited the Government Museum which has a good collection of miniatures, housed in cases alongside spiders and chipmunks. There was a catalogue at the reception, but I was told by the warding staff that it was absolutely not available to me. This was frustrating as Dr Sharma from the Mewar Research Institute had assured me that the catalogue contained valuable information.

In Jaipur I met with Dr Das for an art historical exchange over tea and rose biscuits. Mr Sahai from the Palace Museum showed me the store and told me about some conservation problems he had (example: paper cuts made from gold leaf stuck between glass panes, which would crumble into dust when touched, but which have to be removed from their casing because they have slipped). I also met with Dr Hot Chand of the Government Museum. He and I had interesting discussions over the necessity of some treatments currently standard in Indian paper conservation such as washing, deacidification and bleaching of paintings, as well as ethics in general.

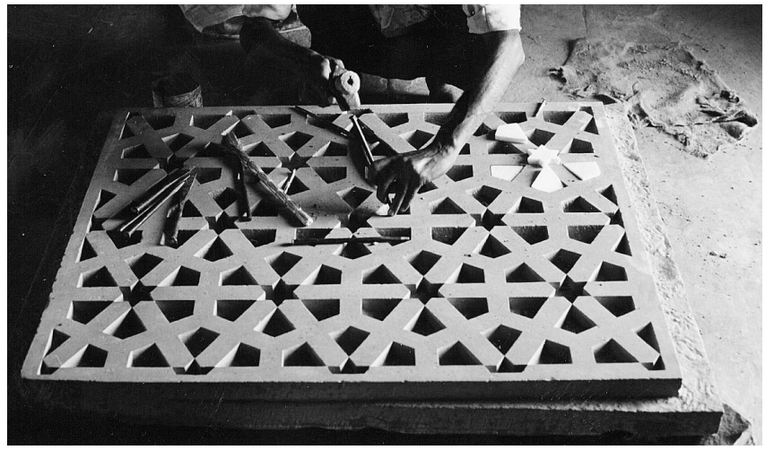
I also met with Bannu Ved Pal Sharma, a traditional miniature painter who also works as a restorer. He was able to give me a lot of practical information on painting, materials and restoration. It was fascinating to hear him explain his painting techniques and to see his burnishers and brushes.

Finally, I visited the Kumarappa National Handmade Paper Institute in Sanganer. Here, research is under way into finding paper-making materials that are easily obtainable and cheap for village paper production. Mr Singh of the Institute showed me a traditional paper maker's house, where Mohammed Kagzi and his family make paper by hand from recycled old rag paper and jute fibres. He uses the traditional flexible mold, squatting before his vat. His wife brushes the damp sheets onto the house wall to dry, and they are burnished by hand over a curved slab of wood with a little linseed oil.

In between visiting museums, I managed to see some of India's better known sights: amazing giant Jain statues in a cliff face at Gwalior; at Agra, breathtaking Mughal monuments and, of course, the Taj Mahal..

All in all I learnt a lot on this study trip, not only about conservation, but also about museum politics, amazing craftsmanship, endurance, Mughal history and the beauty of India. And I didn't get ill once.

**Acknowledgements**
I would like to express my thanks: to everyone who helped me during my trip; to the Nehru Trust and to the RCA for providing funding; and also to Dr Deborah Swallow and Mike Wheeler for planning my itinerary.



Photography by Anna Hillcoat-Imanishi

Figure 3. Stonemason making a sandstone filigree screen with white marble infills in Agra.

# Miniature paintings, paper, paintings, parrots, elephants and monkeys - a study trip to India.

*Anna Hillcoat-Imanishi*
RCA/V&A student, MA in Paper Conservation

As soon as I started my course at the V&A people started talking about sending me to India - surely, I thought, they can't want to get rid of me this quickly, but... I was suddenly on my way in October 1997, with the aid of a generous travel grant awarded by the Nehru Trust, and further financial help from the RCA. My mission was five-fold: to find the collections of Indian miniature paintings; to find conservation studios; to find and meet practising miniature painters and historians who would enlighten me; to learn about India and, finally, to write about it all. Delhi, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, Jaipur, Agra, Gwalior and Delhi were to be the eight stations of my journey.



Photography by Anna Hillcoat-Imanishi

Figure 1. Manuscripts in Jodhpur Library

In Delhi I was received by Manjit Debashis and his family, who very kindly allowed me to stay in their home. This gave me a unique insight into the everyday life of a Delhi family. I also acquired an in-depth understanding of some of the problems of government-funded conservation and museums, as Manjit is a paintings conservator who spent time in the V&A as an intern a few years back.

I visited the National Craft Museum, whose director, Jotindra Jain, although very busy, spent a lot of time with me explaining the philosophy behind his collection. The objects are all displayed in a very contextual way, the floors covered with rush matting and the natural clay walls covered with traditional wall paintings. The entire museum building is an example of Indian craftsmanship, as well as the objects it displays. Although the museum is fairly small it has a conservation studio employing three conservators. Storage is very accessible and highly visible with objects shelved in glass cases, as the store is also the study collection.

In the National Museum of Art I was not quite so lucky. The curator I had contacted, and whom I wished to take me around the collection, reserve and stores, had forwarded my letter on to a conservator, who happened to be on holiday. When I returned at a later date, the curator was not available.

At my next stop, in Jodhpur, I was taken care of by the charming Dr Naval Krishna of the Jodhpur Palace Museum. After a guided tour of the fort, where the museum is located, I visited the newly established conservation studio led by Alok Kumar. He had trained under Agrawal in the Indian Conservation Centre at Lucknow, specialising in mural paintings. Two other conservators were working under him, and with the support of the Indian Conservation Institute, a good studio has been installed at the fort. Here, the conservators work on the vast and varied collections of the Maharajas of Jodhpur, ranging from elephant howdahs and weapons to tantric meditation drawings and ancient manuscripts. The conservators are doing an amazing job considering the difficulties encountered when trying to obtain materials and funds to carry out projects.

I was also shown the textile stores, the weapons collection and the library. Here books, manuscripts and loose papers are kept wrapped in the traditional way, where each pack of pages belonging together is placed in an envelope, and stacks of about 50 envelopes are kept between slightly larger wooden boards and then tied up. This bundle is then wrapped with red cloth and again secured with ribbon. The contents of each bundle are written on a piece of paper which is attached to the bundle. The important pieces are kept in lockable metal fireproof cabinets. In this way the library houses about 5000 manuscripts, together with 7000 account books of the palace, which are kept slightly more loosely on wooden shelves behind polythene sheets.

In Jodhpur I also had the opportunity to observe the Dussera festival and to ride on the back of the scooter







Photography by V&A Photographic Studio

Figure 2. State Bed from Melville House, c.1697 (Museum No. W.35-1949)

a large museum space, we strongly believe that variety is required, with changes of pace and presentation. Some displays will offer grand, elegant spaces, others will invite the visitors to look closely at a single intriguing object, or to enjoy a dense display of, say, tea-caddies or mezzotints. Atmospheric and glamorous displays will give free reign to the imagination of visitors, as perhaps in a recreation of the Norfolk House Music Room as a space into which visitors can enter, and where, occasionally, they might enjoy live music, as its original occupants did in the 1750s. Other spaces in the gallery will be reserved for naturally-lit comfortable seating, teaching space for school-groups, or such necessities as stores for maintenance.

Variety of design will be complemented by variety in the questions raised by the displays. Within a chronological framework the galleries will consider key issues in the history of design over four centuries: what was new; who decided what was good or fashionable in art and design; and how visual styles such as 'Rococo' or 'Gothic Revival' developed.

One of the great benefits offered by a project as large as this is the opportunity to develop themes right across the period: for example how, between the sixteenth and late nineteenth centuries, Britain changed from an importer of high design goods to a producer, consumer and exporter of such goods, developing in the process the native skills which led to Britain becoming the workshop of the world. Some visitors will be surprised to see objects imported from abroad and others made by foreigners in England, but the key influence of foreign goods, from Europe as well as Asia and the Islamic world, is a necessary part of the story of the development of British design.

Audiences and design are key concerns, but it is unique objects that will sustain the new galleries. Three gallery teams have spent two years working with individual departments searching through and sifting the V&A's unparalleled collections. The vast lists of potential objects for display (especially for the eighteenth and nineteenth century galleries) are currently being refined down to around 3000 objects of all

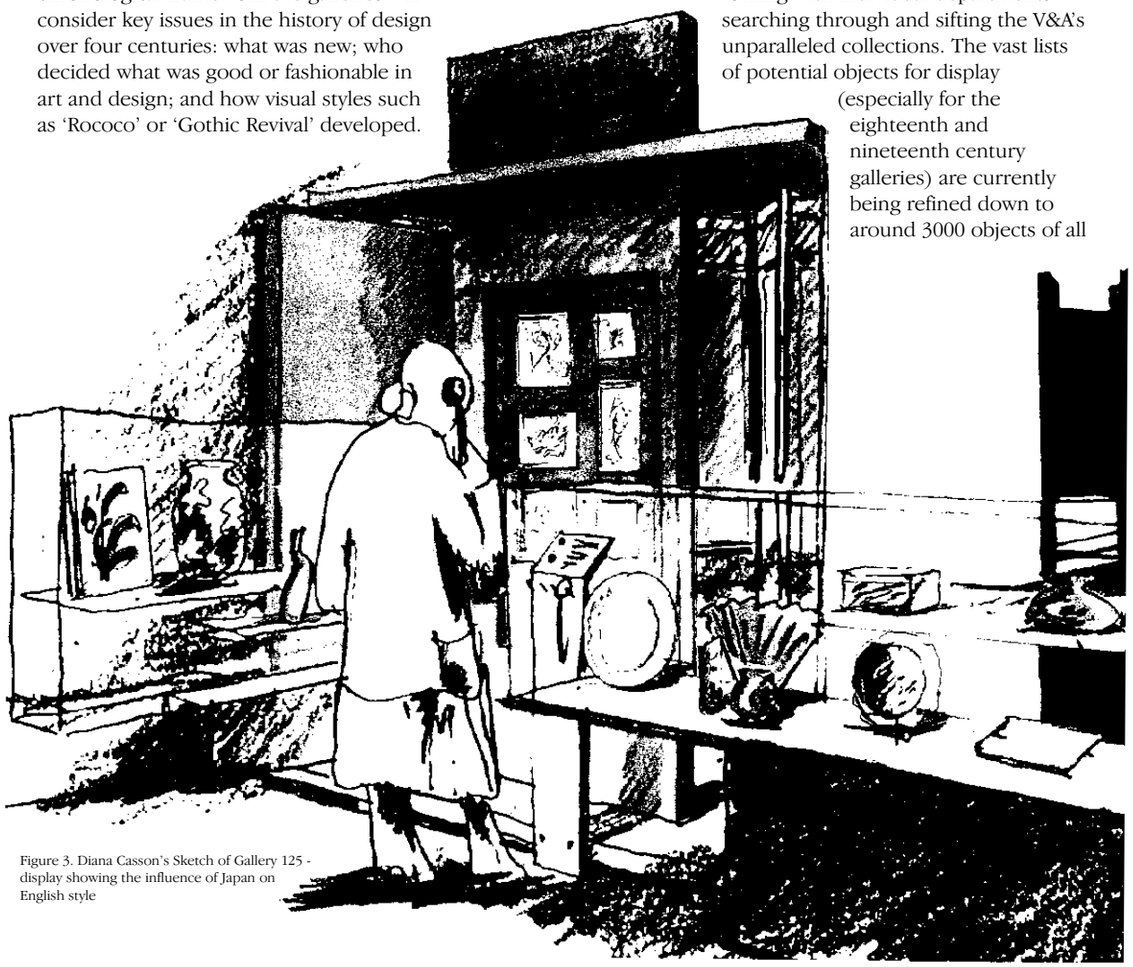


Figure 3. Diana Casson's Sketch of Gallery 125 - display showing the influence of Japan on English style





# TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM 97 - Fabric of an Exhibition: An Interdisciplinary Approach

*Elizabeth-Anne Haldane*
Textile Conservation Student, RCA/V&A Conservation Course

Last September I travelled to Ottawa, Canada, to attend the well organised and enjoyable Textile Symposium 97, which was the first of a planned series of 'North American Textile Conservation Conferences'organised jointly by conservators in the United States and Canada. Each conference is to be hosted by a different institution, the first of which being the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI). The CCI arranged for Symposium 97 to take place at the centrally located National Gallery of Canada, for the presentation of papers on days one to three, followed by a choice of two visits on the fourth day to either the CCI facilities, Laurier House, (a Parks Canada historic site), or the Canadian Museum of Civilisation.

The theme of the conference was the exhibiting of textiles, with an emphasis on the co-operation needed between disciplines – curatorial, scientific, design and conservation – to aim for the safest display of these inherently vulnerable objects. The presentations had been organised into seven themed sessions with between three and five papers in each session.

The demands of a hectic exhibition schedule were contemplated in session one, "Exhibition Perspectives", which included a well received paper from the V&A's Jonathan Ashley-Smith and Lynda Hillyer entitled "Can High Productivity be Productive ?". In the next session the focus switched to "Exhibiting the Historic House", and the problems and ethics involved in caring for textiles which are integral to the overall effect and interpretation of an historic site. The pros and cons of using reproduction fabrics in place of originals was discussed in this session and the next, "Considerations for the Long-term", when Nancy Britton from the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented her paper "Treatment Decisions for the Exhibition of a 1697 English State Bed". The bed is on long-term open display - a factor which contributed to the choice of reproduction textiles for the bed hangings. She informed us that, despite a sound alarm and security guards, once the bed was exhibited she found pinch marks on the curtains from visitors, and "occasionally even body impressions appear nestled in the feather mattress"!

The fourth session, "The Exhibition Environment", was full of useful technical and scientific data on lighting, exhibit cases and packing materials. Day three, and we had reached "Travelling a Collection", which was interesting not only for the shared travelling experiences, but also because of the community involvement in the exhibitions discussed. For example, in the exhibition 'Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880 - 1920', Nancy Buenger from the Chicago Historical Society explained how stock mannequins were modified to look more realistic by using the faces of members of the local community who had loaned items for display. Their plaster masks were fixed to the mannequins. In session six, papers dealing with "Support and Presentation" offered many useful mounting ideas, especially for flags and costume.

The successful collaboration between Cara Varnell, from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Gary Landrum - curator and exhibits producer with Disney - brought the final session, "Expanding Roles", and the conference, to a close, when they presented their paper "Let me Edu-tain You" Historic Artefacts and the World of Themed Entertainment'. They focused attention on the growing number of high quality objects exhibited in non-museum environments and called on conservators to be ready to offer their help and share their expertise.

**Acknowledgments**
I would like to thank the Conservation Unit of the Museums and Galleries Commission, and the Friends of the V&A for the financial support enabling me to attend this conference.

which is why steam is most successful at relaxing keratin materials. It was therefore decided to lightly steam the feathers and to gently manipulate them by hand as they relaxed, in order to straighten and re-lay them in their appropriate configuration on the garment. It was possible to re-attach some of the shed fronds to the larger feathers. These were relocated onto the feather shaft from where they had broken away and adhered with a small spot of Mowilith 50™ in acetone, mixed thickly and used in the manner of a contact adhesive. It was not possible to re-fix the smaller feather fragments.

Once the conservation was complete, the *Jinbaori* was slid onto the support mount and stand taking care to avoid any further disruption to the feathers. It is currently on display in the Toshiba Gallery of Japanese art (Figure 5).

**Acknowledgements**
I should like to thank Greg Irvine of the Far Eastern Department.




Photography by V&A Photographic Studios

Figure 5. *Jinbaori* on display in Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art

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kinds and sizes, from the grandest tapestry to the humblest bodkin. There will be anonymous artefacts and pieces by most of the famous names of British design, from Grinling Gibbons to William Morris; and from the most famous workshops, from Mortlake to Elkington's. Many will be much-loved favourites such as the Great Bed of Ware or Bashaw the Newfoundland dog, others will be new acquisitions such as Canova's *Three Graces.* Some will be pieces which have been in the V&A's collection for many years but which we have been unable to show. One great sadness of the last few years has been the gradual removal of textiles from the present galleries, due to mounting levels of pollution in these spaces which front Cromwell Road. The great state bed made in London in the 1690s for the Earl of Melville, is just such a piece, upholstered with its original crimson silk Genoa velvet and white Chinese silk damask. With highly sophisticated casing allowing close control of temperature, humidity and air cleanliness, it will once more awe visitors, together with a splendid array of textiles of all periods. The selection process is wide ranging and involves not only designers and specialist curators, but the V&A's Conservation and Science sections, and historians skilled in documentary research.

The period rooms which have been such popular exhibits in the old galleries will also be reconsidered. Some will not be returning; the Sizergh Castle room will be returned to its original location (now in the care of the National Trust); others, such as the Hatton Garden Room , have turned out to be less authentic than originally thought. Those which do return to the galleries will be given a sense of architectural integrity. Rather than continue the three-sided, stage-set approach, we will restore the fourth wall of certain rooms, either with their original elements (Norfolk House Music Room) or with a suggestive approach. Visitors will be able to walk into most rooms through the original doors, as used by the original inhabitants.

Period rooms are one category of objects that can be said to "speak for themselves" in that they offer a sense of decorated space which visitors enter to experience. Many objects cannot, of course, be entered or handled directly, but visitors undoubtedly enjoy more and understand better those objects that they are specifically invited to reconsider. The new galleries will include several series of interpretive devices, placed next to the objects to which they relate, for visitors to try themselves. These range from a video that shows how an object was made, to a practical exercise reconstructing the elements of a replica object; from an activity asking visitors to spot the difference between objects and their imitations (perhaps an Indian shawl and its Paisley equivalent), to an audio programme retelling the story depicted on an object. A variety of methods will provide information about orientation, so visitors know where they are and what is available. Study areas will allow visitors to use the Museum's new automated catalogue, CIS, giving information about the collections and about designers and the places where objects were made and used. Most recently, a number of prototype interpretive devices have been produced by gallery educators working with conservation and curatorial departments. These were made to demonstrate our ideas on interpretation to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and are now being tested to see how well they work and last, and what visitors actually gain from them. The lessons learned will be fed back into object selection, interpretive plans and the detailed design of all fifteen galleries.

The British Galleries are the Museum's major priority in the coming years. A large team, of V&A staff and outside consultants, is working on the project. This includes a design team of interior and exhibition designer Dinah Casson of Casson Mann, architect Alistair Gourlay of GA Associates and interior design consultant David Mlinaric. V&A staff right across the Museum are contributing to the project. All are working towards a new kind of V&A gallery, one which will engage, delight and enlighten our visitors.

# "Natural Born Quillers"- conservation of paper quills on the Sarah Siddons plaque frame.

*Clair Battisson,*
Conservation Mounter

Quilling (also known as paper filigree, paper mosaic, paper lace and paper scroll) describes the art of rolling thin strips of paper into various shapes which are collectively used to form designs.

**A Brief History of Quilling**
There is scarce information about early quill work dating from before the middle of the seventeenth century. Travellers have been reported as having seen examples of these intricate designs in old churches throughout Europe. It is noted that early quill work was first used as decoration in religious houses as early as the Medieval period. Monks and nuns had an immense knowledge of inks, paints and gilding and wanted to decorate the screens and panels in their monasteries and convents to imitate the metal filigree work which had originated during the Byzantine period. Quilling adapts well to mosaic designs. In 1495 England had its first paper mill which played a significant factor in the development of quill work. Paper, being far less expensive than precious metals, was cut into thin strips which were rolled into assorted shapes, then arranged together in elaborately constructed designs. Once painted and gilded, if viewed from a distance, the quills could imitate metal filigree. Designs have been found in English churches and religious houses dating from the fifteenth century up to the reformation in the sixteenth century. It is thought that close examination of early panels and screens in churches throughout Europe may show early surviving quill work.

A revival of decorative panels and elaborate designs surrounding miniatures followed in the seventeenth century. Paper filigree appears to have been a substitute for expensive paintings during the reign of Queen Anne. A rekindled interest developed among young ladies in the eighteenth century who would practise quilling, along with other handicrafts, between social events. During this period professionals taught the craft and sold their own finished work.

Objects from this phase include tea caddies, framed panels, ink trays, cabinets.

There appear to have been many revivals of quilling in America with a particular interest in the decoration of sconces. Whenever metal filigree became fashionable there was an awakening interest in the use of paper as a substitute.

**The Eddison Collection of Theatrical Material**
The quilled frame belonging to the ceramic plaque of Sarah Siddons (Museum No. S.1071-1996) is part of a collection of theatrical material accumulated by the actor Robert Eddison (1908-1991). The collection includes prints, drawings, watercolours, books and ceramics of Georgian theatrical material, most of which is rare and of national importance. Robert Eddison was a great classical actors' actor who cared for little else other than the theatre.

The ceramic plaque is a portrait of Sarah Siddons (1755 - 1831), an outstanding actress of the English stage who had a great effect on her audiences. She excelled at tragedy.

**Conservation of the Quilled Frame**
The object is made up of three components:
- the quilled frame
- the ceramic plaque
- the backboard.

When the object arrived in the studio it was in very poor condition. The frame was split: lots of quills were missing and those remaining were very dirty (some being decorated with small pieces of shell). The ceramic plaque had an old infill repair on the lower rim, and the back board was attached to the frame with sealing wax.





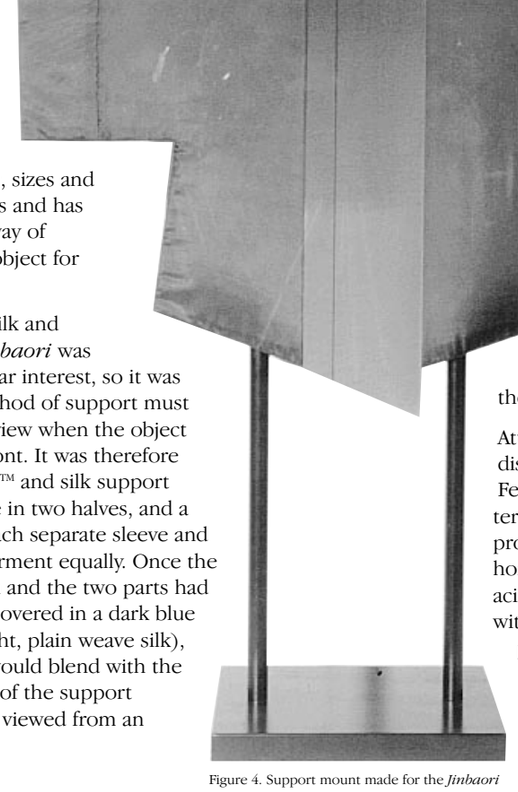



Photography by V&A Photographic Studios

Figure 3. Support mount made for Chinese Kimono.

of a smooth silk is important, to allow the support to slide easily into the object concerned. The whole assemblage may then be hung on a strong metal T-Bar kimono stand. Vilene™ is a heavyweight, non-woven, bonded, inert polyester fibre material which is readily available through most outlets of furnishing fabrics. This basic method is simple, inexpensive and readily adaptable for the different shapes, sizes and styles of these garments and has become the standard way of mounting this type of object for long term display.

The 'shot' irridescent silk and feather lining of the *Jinbaori* was unusual and of particular interest, so it was requested that any method of support must not obscure this from view when the object was shown from the front. It was therefore decided that the Vilene™ and silk support would have to be made in two halves, and a section inserted into each separate sleeve and front to support the garment equally. Once the pattern had been taken and the two parts had been made they were covered in a dark blue habotai (soft, lightweight, plain weave silk), chosen so the colour would blend with the object if any small part of the support should be visible when viewed from an acute angle (Figure 4).



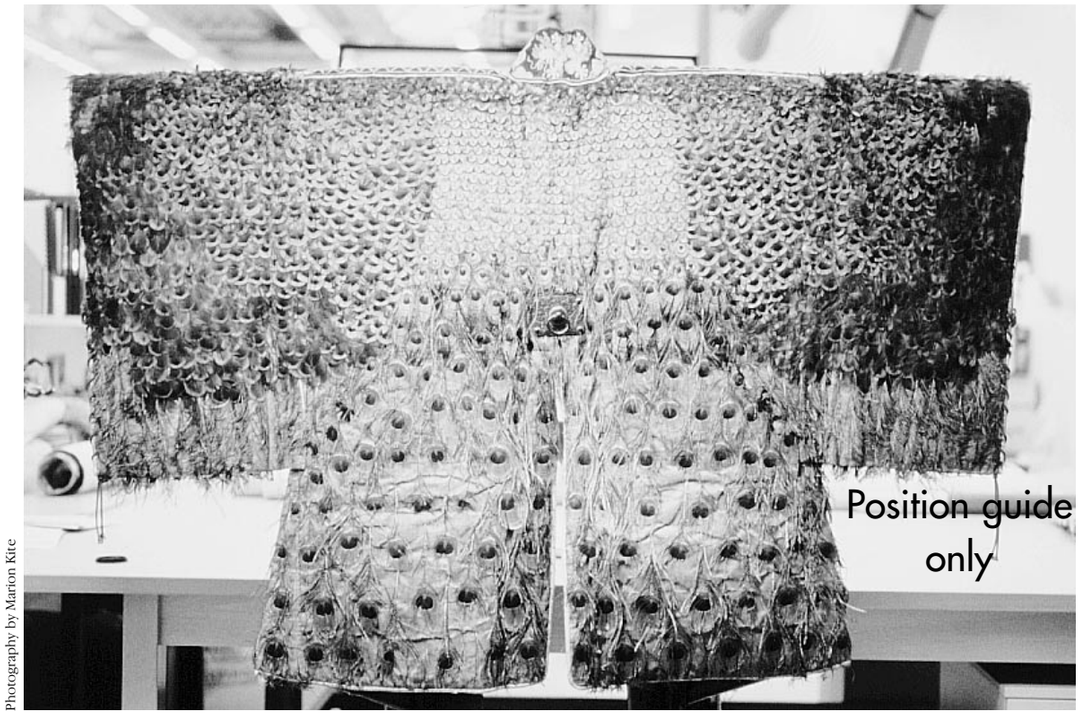
Photography by V&A Photographic Studios

Figure 4. Support mount made for the *Jinbaori*

The first part of the remedial conservation was to repair the damaged velvet elements. Silk habotai and a very fine nylon net were dyed to colour match using Lanaset™ (a range of metal complex and reactive dyes of proven fastness). The fragmented edge binding of the collar was carefully unpicked on one side only to give access to the back of the velvet lining. Dyed habotai cut to the collar shape was inserted behind the velvet, and the velvet was couched through onto this using a fine polyester thread. The fragmented edge binding was reset in position and covered with the net which served to support and hold the fragments in place and finish the edge of the collar. The velvet on the tab fastenings was also couched onto habotai. The button which would have held the tab fastenings closed across the front of the garment was missing, so a simple silk-covered button was made and sewn in place. The original button would most likely have been horn and similar to those that held the reveres back to the shoulders.

It was decided that only the most damaged of the small areas of weakness on the Japanese ground fabric would be repaired as these were more cosmetic rather than structural. Where necessary these were couched through to the interlining which was one of the layers of construction.

Attention was then turned to the disrupted and damaged feathers. Feathers are a keratin material; a term applied to chemically related protein materials such as scale, hoof, horn, nail and feathers. The amino acid composition is complex, but within the morphology adjacent protein chains associate with each other through hydrogen bonding. Most hydrogen bonds are disrupted at temperatures within the range of 40-60°C




Photography by Marion Kite

Figure 2. The *Jinbaori.* Back view

This garment had been in the collection since 1905 but it was only recently that its true significance had been established. It had been previously described as a theatrical costume for an angel and had been confused with the costume worn by the principal actor in the Noh drama Hagoromo. It came into the Conservation Department in the early 1990s for boxing and packing as part of a project to improve storage conditions, as there was concern that the feathers were disintegrating and the costume was being damaged. There was no opportunity to research the garment or to carry out any conservation to it at that time.

For storage the robe had been interleaved with acid free tissue and folded along its length twice. Each fold was padded with a roll made from polyester wadding covered with cotton fabric to support and cushion each fold. It was then placed in a purpose made acid free box lined with tissue, and covered with more tissue. It was taken back to the Far Eastern Department for indefinite storage.

In 1997 some kimono were examined with a view to including them in the next Toshiba Gallery rotation and an opportunity became available for a curator to research the robe and to include it in the Gallery display. It was at this point identified as a rare and important *Jinbaori.* Now required for gallery display an opportunity was available for conservation to be carried out.

**Condition**

The *Jinbaori* was clean and generally sound in overall structure but there were some small areas of weakness to the Japanese ground silk of the body. Many feathers were bent and out of alignment on the *Jinbaori.* Some had their structure disrupted and were shedding fronds. The silk velvet on the collar lining and fastening tabs had degraded and split, and the velvet used as an edge binding on the collar had degraded and fragmented and in some places fallen away.

**Conservation and Preparation for Display**

Although a certain amount of remedial conservation was necessary to this object, the primary concern was to give adequate support to the heavy *Jinbaori* whilst it was on display. Much work has been carried out over the last few years into the display of heavy Japanese Kimono and Chinese Robes and a method has been worked out using a substantial purpose-made Vilene™ support, tailored to the exact shape of the object and covered in silk (Figure 3). The final covering









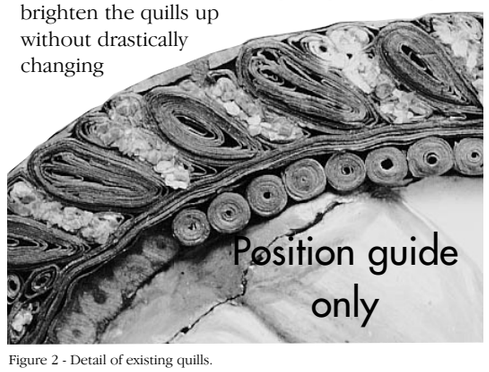


Photography by Simon Fleury

Figure 1. The frame and plaque (235 x 182mm) (Museum No S.1071-1996).

Close examination showed that the infill was also made from sealing wax and was attached to the backboard. Luckily there was a large gap separating the sealing wax and ceramic allowing easy removal of the backboard and old repair without inflicting any further damage to the plaque or the frame. The plaque was taken to Victoria Oakley (Head of Ceramics & Glass Conservation). The old infill had been made too big for the plaque, forcing the frame to split at the top, which had caused stress to the paperwork in the surrounding area. Tim Miller (Senior Furniture and Woodwork conservator) repaired the frame using a glue solution of Hoechst Mowilith™ DM132 39-9363.

Pauline Webber (Head of Paper Conservation) advised on the cleaning and conservation of the existing quills. Most of the surface dirt was too ingrained to remove, although slight cleaning did brighten the quills up without drastically changing their appearance. They were cleaned using a cotton wool swab moistened with saliva.




Photography by Simon Fleury

Figure 2 - Detail of existing quills.

The swabs were made small enough to allow access in and around the coils. The quills were quite difficult to treat as the object is so small. Great care had to be taken not to apply too much pressure as the edges of the paper were already frayed and could be easily damaged further. The small areas of shell on the quilling will be dealt with at a later date.

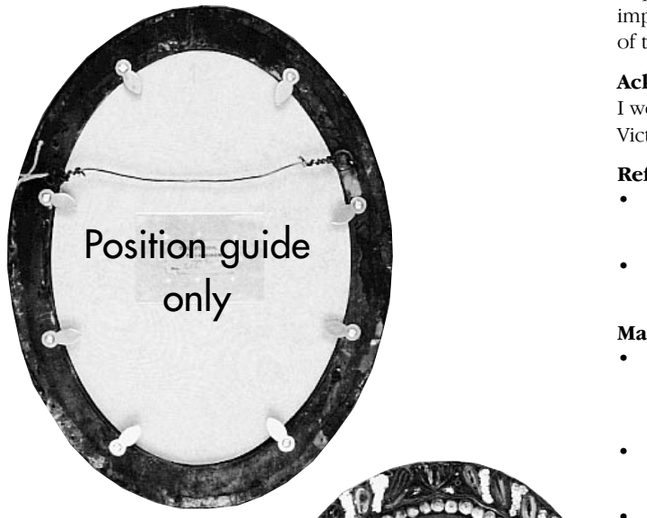
It was decided to replace the missing areas of quilling with new quills. Any papers that were used in repair were chosen for their similarity in weight and texture to the existing papers. Examination of the underside of the loose quills showed both the original colours of the quills (blue and cream) and that the round quills were made up of two pieces of paper. To make the new quills mould-made papers were toned to a shade of blue or cream as near as possible to the original colour. The papers were cut into long strips which were the same width as the existing quills (3mm). Traditional quilling seems to have been made using 3mm wide strips, giving depth and a 3D effect without being too bulky. The strips were lightly pasted with wheat starch paste then rolled around my improvised quilling tools - a straightened out paper clip, a pin and a small bradawl! After many attempts the quills started to roll out.

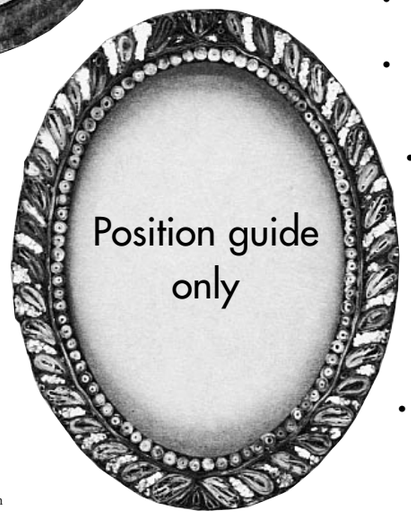
The cream paper was coiled first, cut when enough had been rolled and then the blue paper followed covering the outer edges. Different size quills were made to fit the different parts of the frame. The ends were secured using wheat starch paste and when dry they were toned with watercolours to look like the existing quills. Any odd shaped quills were made, then coloured in the same way.

Any loose pieces of paper or slightly unattached quills were secured and any loose original and replacement quills were attached to the frame using wheat starch paste. The outer edge of the

frame had a paper border. Areas where paper was missing were replaced with a modern 'antique' paper, toned to the shade of the surrounding area then attached using wheat starch paste.

The label on the backboard was removed using water, dried and pressed, then encapsulated in polyester and attached to a new backboard using Beva 371™. The new backboard has been cut from hardboard which, after consultation with Pat West (Framing specialist in Prints, Drawings and Photographs Department), is held in position using sliding clips (Figure 3). The clips have been screwed into the verso of the frame to avoid any banging of the frame which may have upset the quills, and the repaired split. Possibly also the ceramic plaque might have been broken were it framed in the standard way.




Photography by Simon Fleury

Figure 3 - The frame complete with new quills and the new backboard.

**Life after Conservation Mounting**
The frame and plaque will be reunited in Ceramics Conservation. Victoria Oakley's suggested treatment for the plaque loss is to make a new infill for both aesthetic and safety reasons. The filling will be made from synthetic fillers such as All Purpose Polyfilla™ (a cellulose reinforced plaster of Paris) and Fine Surface Polyfilla™ (vinyl acetate co polymer mixed with organic mineral fillers), supported temporarily by dental wax whilst drying. It will be levelled and smoothed to the desired finish then retouched by hand using acrylic paint to match the adjacent areas.

**Other Examples of Quilling**
On display in the V&A British Art and Design galleries there are various examples of quilling. A quilling kit containing all the necessary implements is on show together with examples of tea caddies, trays and panels.

**Acknowledgements**
I would like to thank Pauline Webber, Tim Miller, Victoria Oakley, Simon Fleury and Pat West.

**References**

- Arron, E., *Quilling - the art of paper scroll work,* 1976, Batsford craft paperback
- Christy, B. and Tracy, D., *Quillling - paper art for everyone,* 1974, Chicago Regnery

**Materials & Suppliers**

- Mould made papers - Oulin du vergerde Puymoyen supplied by Atlantis European Ltd, 146 Brick Lane, London E1 6RU
- Wheat starch paste - BDH Laboratory Supplies, Poole, BH1 1TD
- All purpose Polyfilla & Fine Surface Polyfilla - Polycell Products Ltd, 30 Broadwater Rd, Welwyn, Garden City, Herts. AL7 3AZ
- Hoeschst Mowilith DM132 39-9363 - Hoechst, Hoechst Aktiengesellschaft, 65926 Frankfurt am Main, Deutchland.
- Beva 371- A.P. Fitzpatrick, 142 Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green, London E1 5QJ
- Polyester - Secol Ltd, Howlett Way, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1HZ
- Watercolours - Winsor and Newton Ltd, 51 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1AB





# The Conservation and Mounting of a *Jinbaori*

*Marion Kite* Senior Textiles & Organic Materials Conservator, Textiles Conservation
*Audrey Hill,* Conservation Assistant and Mounting Specialist, Textiles Conservation

This article discusses the conservation, mounting and preparation for display of a rare and unusual Japanese object. The *Jinbaori* evolved in the late 16th century as a surcoat worn over a full suit of Samurai armour. Originally a purely functional garment intended to keep the wearer and his armour dry, it developed into a symbol of personal taste and power, with expensive, exotic textiles and unusual materials being used in the construction and design. It is recorded that Jinbaori were worn into battle.

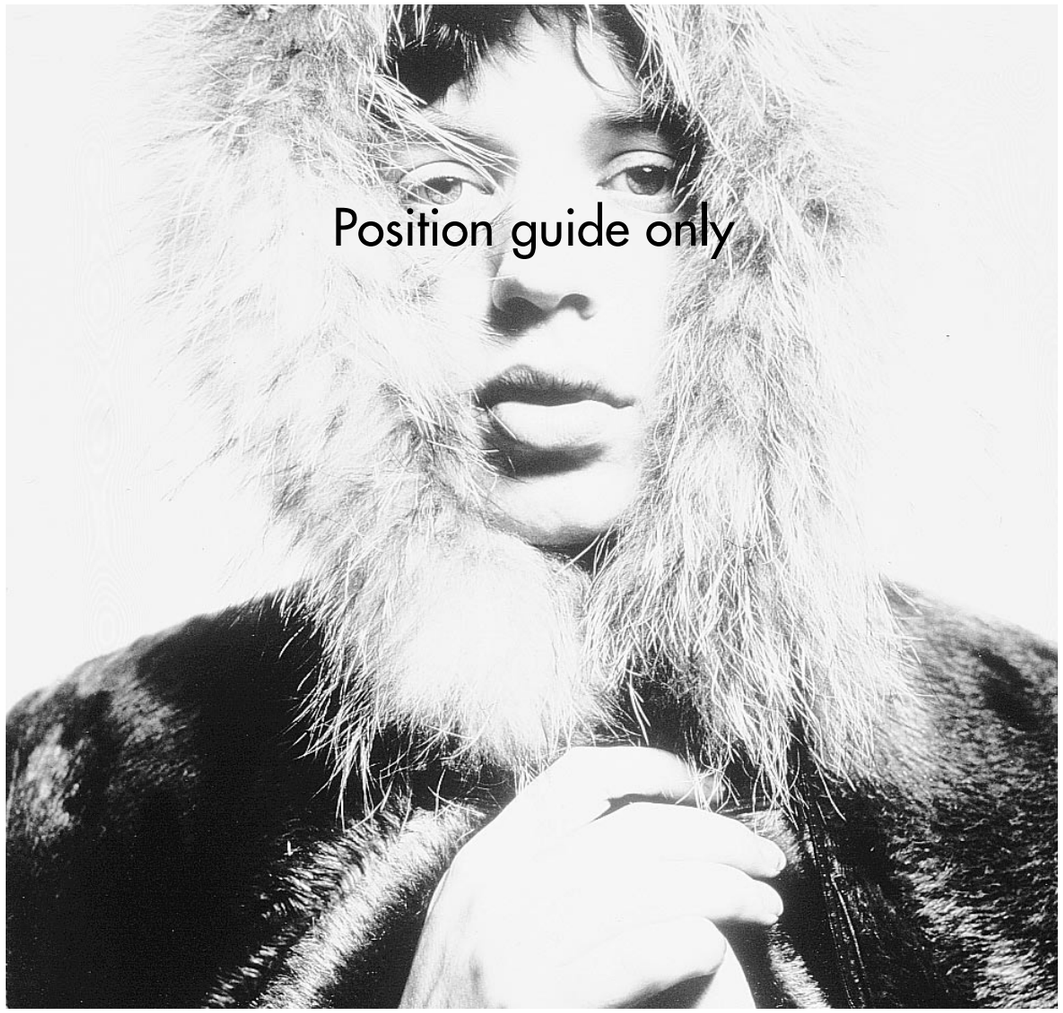
This *Jinbaori* (Samurai c.1700-1800. FED 628-1905) incorporates both Japanese and Chinese silks. The ground silk is of Japanese origin and is worked with metal threads and decorated with peacock feathers. Tail, wing and body contour feathers have been used. The collar and front reveres are stiffened. The back of the collar and reveres are Chinese silk as are the backs of the fastening tabs. The lining of the collar, the shoulder bars and front panels of the fastening tabs are of black velvet. The collar is stiffened with paper which was visible through the damaged area of the collar lining before this was repaired (Figures 1,2).

Different styles of Japanese braiding and cording were used as decorative trimmings. Horn buttons were used to fasten back the reveres and the garment was lined with a silk fabric which was woven throughout with peacock feathers, giving it a strange 'shot' (2-tone) appearance. At the centre back of the garment was a Kanamono (an ornate metal plate) on which the Agemaki (a decorative bow) hangs. Although covered in feathers, the other elements incorporated and the method of construction make this a heavy item of costume.




Photography by Marion Kite

Figure 1. The *Jinbaori.* Front view (Museum No FED 628-1905)




Photography by David Bailey

One of the images from the inaugural show in the new gallery, *Mick Jagger* (Museum No. PH.165-1983)

The first show will be up for six months. Thereafter, we will normally show the history of photography section - including a strong contemporary component - for a year at the time. Each year we will also show two special exhibitions from the collection. The first is *Henri Cartier-Bresson: Elsewhere. Photographs from the Americas and Asia.* This is part of our salute to HC-B who is due to celebrate his 90th birthday this August. The V&A owns 400 of his works. After that, from May 1999, we will feature Lady Hawarden (1822-65) to mark the publication of the first scholarly monograph on her work.

What do we hope for from the Photography Gallery? We believe we are - thanks to our colleagues in Conservation Department - setting new standards in the presentation of fine photographs. Each print is individually assessed in terms of mounting. We are also custom-framing many of the contemporary items. We plan to have both excellent lighting and a new labelling system. We will be using electronic programmes in the gallery from November as part of our range of educational initiatives. We will show the best of photography in a new light to a large new audience.

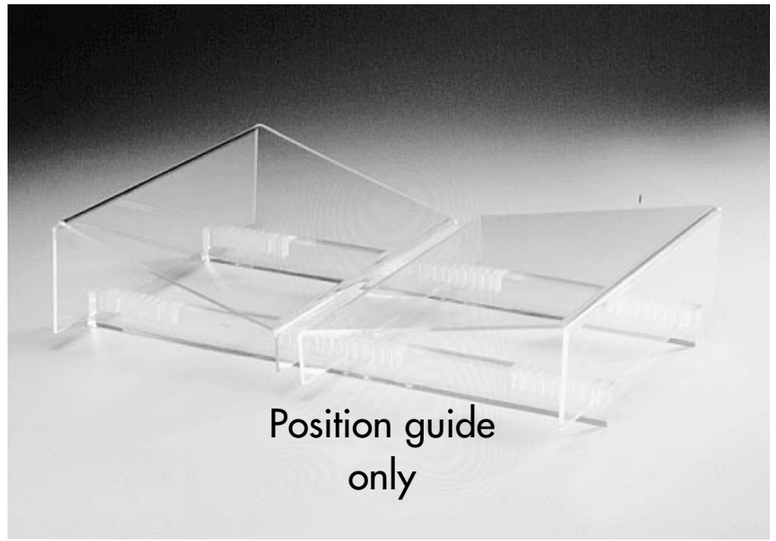




# A New Book Mount

*Simon Fleury*
Conservation Mounter

The following is a brief outline of the further developments to the Perspex™ (ICI) slotted book cradle design featured in *Journal* 22[1]. This method was designed as a reusable alternative to the board and cloth cradle used at the Museum for the display of books and related materials. In the period following the article, the new design of two Perspex combs and wedges was used for several in-house displays and exhibitions. During this time the pros and cons of the design were further assessed. The cradle had worked as a prototype but with regular use there emerged several aspects that warranted further attention.




Photography by Simon Fleury

Figure 1. The design using two slotted combs

The design divides into two distinct parts: Perspex comb supports that are reusable and wedges of Perspex or mount board that support the open book. In practice the wedge supports proved a success. The problems lay with the Perspex combs. The first was with the matching of the wedge supports to the combs. If there was any discrepancy between the verticals of the wedge supports and the slots in the combs it became difficult to slot them together. This put strain on the teeth of the combs which resulted in them snapping. The second problem occurred when trying to reuse the combs for different books. It became obvious that it was not always possible to match the comb length to a specific book, even with a selection of lengths. This resulted in a mismatch, causing the ends of the combs to extend beyond the book, detracting from the appearance of the book on display. The combs could be cut down to fit but this just added further time and complications.

As the cradles had been used for several exhibitions, and in light of the problems with the slotted design, it seemed appropriate to hold a further development meeting. Both designs were discussed and Brian Griggs, Head of Design at the Museum suggested that a possible solution to the drawbacks with the slotted cradle would be to replace the two slotted combs with a single block of Perspex, longitudinally slotted. The slotted block would sit centrally, directly below the book, replacing the two combs of the original design, with the wedges of Perspex slotting along one edge into the block to support the open book.

Design Animations, the company responsible for supplying the original Perspex components, was asked to provide a prototype Perspex block. This was made from 12mm Perspex and measured 150mm x 150mm. The longitudinal slots were 5mm deep and 2mm wide. The distance between slots, centre to centre was 5mm. This distance proved to be the only critical measurement. In order to accommodate the varying spine widths it is necessary to keep the distance between the slots to a minimum. It is not possible to allow for every eventuality and difficulties occur when trying to match the gap between the wedges to the width of the book's spine. If the distance between the slots is any wider than 5mm it leads to an inability to support the boards of the open book adequately.




Photography by Simon Fleury

Figure 2. Slotted base for supporting perspex wedges

The prototype cradle proved an immediate success. Both of the above mentioned drawbacks were resolved. The original concept of dividing the cradle into two composite parts had been further refined and simplified. The use of the wedges as the means of supporting the boards of the book remained, but now they only just slotted at their fore-edge into the base support. This solved the difficulties that had arisen when trying to match the combs to the wedges. The single block is visually less intrusive. The block sits below the book making it more discreet than the combs and generally one size fits all. The chosen size of the block was deemed appropriate for most situations but it is necessary when displaying smaller books to cut the block into quarters. The single block is also more stable than the slotted comb method.

This latest design has now been used for several exhibitions within the Museum and for an outside loan. It is easy to work with and the measuring time for each individual book has been reduced to 15 minutes. The setting up of the cradle is very straight forward, only requiring a correct match between the slotted wedges and the spine width, and the cost of the block is less than that of the original comb design. The blocks can be reused while the Perspex wedges are made by the Museum Joiners to fit each individual book. The design of the wedges will allow for an up stand if required.

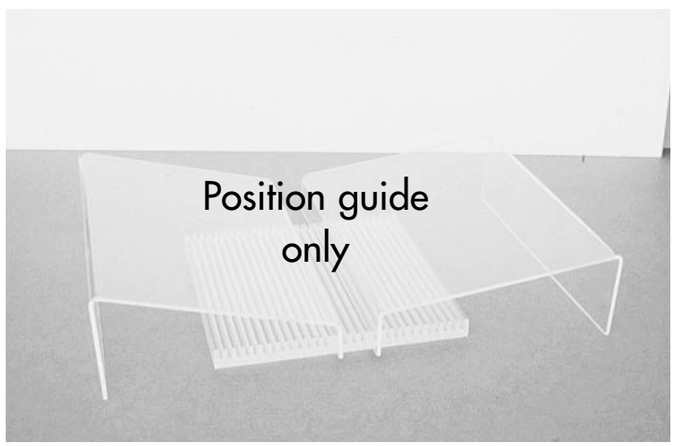
A detailed description of the specifications and steps for using this method are held at the Institute of Paper Conservation.

**Acknowledgements**
Thanks to Helen Shenton, Roy Mandeville, Fiona Mackinnon and everyone at Design Animation.

**References**

1. Shenton H., Norman D. and Fleury S., Mounts for the Display of Books, *V&A Conservation Journal* 22, (January 1997), pp16-18.

2. Shenton H., Developments in the display of books at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *The Paper Conservator* 21, pp.65-79.




Photography by Simon Fleury

Figure 3. The latest design





# Photography in a new light

*Mark Haworth-Booth*
Curator of Photographs; Prints, Drawings and Photographs Department

The V&A's new Photography Gallery will open on 21 May 1998. If the museum ground plan were thought of in terms of real estate or a Monopoly Board, the gallery is in a prime location - Park Lane or Piccadilly. It is in the heart of the Museum on the ground floor, beside the temporary exhibition galleries. In fact, the space - Gallery 38 (see greyed area on Museum plan, page 4) - was one of the exhibition galleries, most recently used for the first room of the Carl and Karin Larsson show. This is a large, barrel-vaulted gallery of 350 square metres. We are very grateful to the Director and the Central Management Team for making this handsome location available to us. The Director's gesture of support for photography as a creative medium has been reciprocated by a major company which has come forward to sponsor the gallery, details of which will be announced after this article goes to press.

New photography galleries were opened last autumn at two museums which are very like the V&A in many ways (**not** including their funding) - the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Met.) and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (Getty). The Met's new space was well received when it opened last year, with fibre optic lighting for its early daguerreotypes (on hard-to-see polished silver surfaces). Their new gallery is smaller than ours but the Met has built up one of the greatest of all photographic collections, particularly in recent years. Like us, their emphasis is on photography as a creative medium. The Getty's space is more comparable to ours. It opened with an exhibition on *Capturing Time,* which show-cased the Getty's unrivalled collection from the origins of photography to a masterwork by David Hockney from the 1980s.

Our situation is more like the Getty's than the Met's because Los Angeles did not previously have a space where the story of the history of photography was available on museum walls in a central location. New York City, on the other hand, has offered such a valuable resource for the past four decades, thanks to the Department of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art. Their Photography Gallery is where many of today's curators, myself included, first saw the history of photography treated as a serious discipline. Where in Europe can one go to see a history of creative photography? At present, I can't think of anywhere. So, the V&A's new space will be used in two ways. It will be both low-key and high-tech, in the style of the Museum's own chief designer Brian Griggs. The gallery will be divided by a central spine wall. Off that will be a series of spur walls that can be configured in different ways to accommodate a variety of displays. Visitors entering the gallery will see, first, a pleasant seating area to the left with copies of museum publications - such as the newly-published *Photography: An Independent Art. Photographs from the Victoria and Albert Museum 1839-1996.* In fact, the exhibition of this book is the first show. Visitors will proceed along the left-hand (West) side of the gallery, following a chronological photo-history. The story continues back down the right- hand side of the space. Like the book, this inaugural show is divided into eight sections. The final section is titled 'Fond wrestlers with photography', a phrase used by the late Helen Chadwick to describe her own use of the medium as an artist who liked photographic effects while loathing the fetishisation of photographic equipment and technique. Chadwick's tour de force from 1986, *The Oval Court,* will be shown in this section: to make this extraordinary installation she used computers, photo-booth snaps, photocopies toned blue, and five spheres coated in real gold leaf.

Helen Chadwick was among a group of well-wishers and advisors who helped nurture the Photography Gallery in its protracted development. Other generous helpers include the photographer and co-founder of The Photographers' Gallery, Dorothy Bohm, and the writer and Reith lecturer, Marina Warner. Our outside assessors in the early days of the project were Dr David Alan Mellor of the University of Sussex and the critic Sarah Kent of Time Out.