

The Textile Conservation Workshop

A new service for private collectors of quilts and textiles is being developed by Patsy Orlofsky, Kate Schiefer Dodge, and Karen Clark. Sparked by the ideas of Ms. Orlofsky, herself a collector of quilts and, with her late husband Myron, author of the comprehensive *QUILTS IN AMERICA*, The Textile Conservation Workshop provides thoroughgoing preservation and restoration techniques comparable to the best procedures used by museum laboratories.

Old textiles suffer from the weight of years. Natural fibers are naturally biodegradable, and normal use, natural light and contact with even natural acids of other ordinary substances contribute to their demise. Dust and dirt abrade them. Insects eat them. Moisture rots them. Certain mordants or dye chemicals degrade into acidic compounds over the years and destroy them. The caustic substances of most bleaches and soaps "burn" them if left in contact long enough.

As textiles age, the effect of all these normal actions is to gradually weaken the individual fibers so that, even when no holes may be visible, the substance of the fabric is disappearing. The aim of conservation is to slow down these processes, and in some instances to eliminate them altogether.

Kate Schiefer Dodge, a partner in the Workshop, is a skilled professional in conservation techniques who has worked with the Peruvian textiles collection in The American Museum of Natural History and with the religious garments and accessories collection in The Jewish Museum in New York. Karen Clark, another professional in the enterprise, has completed the fine graduate training program in museum conservation at Cooperstown, NY. The Cooperstown Masters degree program requires a year of classroom, studio, and laboratory work followed by a second year pursuing a major project, followed by a third year of internship in a museum program. Ms. Clark interned at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and at The Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum in Delaware where she worked with Margaret Fikioris in the textile laboratory.

The procedures followed at the Textile Conservation Workshop (hereinafter TCW) are custom tailored for each piece being considered. Variety in textiles span the centuries and all possible differences in size, fiber content, manufacturing technique, surface finish, and condition of repair.

Upon its arrival at TCW, each piece is examined and evaluated concerning its needs and the possible procedures appropriate to them. A report is given to the owner and measures to be taken mutually agreed upon. The article is then photographed in its "before" condition and a file begun which will eventually include a complete record of the known history of the article, its description, condition, the procedures used, and the results.

In the case of a quilt it may be determined that it would benefit from washing, and TCW has complete facilities for the task. A huge, shallow tub-table holds a quilt fully flat and supported on a fiber glass screen, allowing it to be washed with gentle detergents and rinsed thoroughly with de-ionized water with no stress put on the threads. The dirty water can run off freely through the screen without squeezing or wringing.

Many quilts cannot be washed, of course, and TCW is equipped to use various dry cleaning procedures, including gentle suction to remove soil.

The question of repairs to physical damage or replacement of missing areas is one which must be considered from several aspects. If the quilt is an important historical document, it should be allowed to retain what integrity it has. If its preservation requires that badly worn areas be physically supported, it should be done obviously, so that repair is not mistaken for original work. Some dealers and collectors are primarily interested in the market value of an article and want repairs done as invisibly as possible. And often museums and collectors are interested in the visual integrity of a piece and ask for restoration to be done on that basis.

Continued...

The principals and the board of directors for TCW have plans for expanding their activities in the future. They expect to add more equipment as the work grows, and they want to broaden the workshop concept to include a center for scholarly investigation where the information they have been developing can be shared with others.

For further information about TCW's conservation services and fees, inquiries may be addressed to: The Textile Conservation Workshop, Main Street, South Salem, NY 10590. The staff welcomes queries.



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QUILT EVENTS - 1979

WINTER FANTASY - In the land where quilts are truly appreciated, the Minnesota Quilters want to wrap you in warmth. They will hold a national quilt show, workshops, lectures and exhibits called "Winter Fantasy" in connection with the famous Winter Carnival. It will be held January 25-27, 1979.

For inside fun, view quilts, see blocks from the Fantasy quilt block contest, attend how-to lectures and workshops on Trapunto, pattern drafting, batik, Hawaiian quilting, folk art and much more given by such notables as Michael James, Chris Edmonds, Helen Kelley, Candy DeMaggio and Joyce Gross.

For outside fun, visit the Winter Carnival which transforms St. Paul into a winter adventure land with activities such as ski-jumping, speed skating, coronations, parades, etc. For info write Minnesota Quilters, P.O. Box 192, Maple Plain, MN 55359.

PATCH IN TIME IV, a quilt show of quality quilts from museums, private collectors, and individuals to be held at the Jack Tar Hotel, Van Ness & Geary Blvd., San Francisco, CA. June 30, July 1, 2, & 3, 1979. There will be a limited number of spaces for workshops with Jinny Beyer, Michael James and Deborah Kalia. Commercial inquiries invited. For advance registration, hotel information write MVQA, Box 270, Mill Valley, CA 94941. Send SASE.

QUILT SYMPOSIUM '79 sponsored by the Santa Clara Valley Quilt Association will be held July 5-7, 1979 at Ricky's Hyatt House, Palo Alto, CA. The program will include lectures, demonstrations, a quilt show, authors, an autograph party, commercial exhibits and a banquet. Such notables as Jean Ray Laury, Jinny Beyer, Chris Edmonds, Charles Counts, Helen Kelley, Wailani Johansen and many more surprises. Registration will be available Feb '79. Send self-addressed stamped business envelope to registrar: Isabelle Long, 159 Carlisle Way, Sunnyvale, CA 94087.

Calendar

Please check dates and times before traveling to events, shows, etc. There may have been changes and it will save you needless trips and unhappiness if events are cancelled or dates changed.

- Feb. 3 & 4
Fresno, CA
- QUILT SHOW "Quilts & Other Patchwork" from 10-5, sponsored by the Heritage Quilters, at the Fresno County Fairgrounds Art Bldg. Donation \$2. Srs.\$1. For info: Bernice Bender, 1321 W. Roberts, Fresno 93711
- Feb. 3
Watsonville
CA
- FEBRUARY QUILT FAIR, at the Westview Presbyterian Church, Watsonville. Mini quilt show, lecture on Hawaiian Quilts by Joyce Gross, judging a prize quilt by Shirley Thomas, demonstrations, Hardman Quilt Film. Adm chg. For info: Send SASE to Jean Street, 80 Zils Road, La Selva Beach, CA 95076
- Feb. 8 & 10
San Francisco
CA
- Workshops by Beth Gutcheon to be held at Jack Tar Hotel from 10-3 with lunch break. Sponsored by the MVQA. For info: SASE to MVQA, Box 270, Mill Valley, CA 94941
- Feb. 17
Grinnell, 10
- QUILT SHOW "Love is ... a Quilt" sponsored by women of the United Church of Christ. Congregational to be held at 4th & Broad St. Quilts owned by members of congregation shown. Workshops. Small adm. chg. For info: SASE Dorothy Loudon, Rt.A, Grinnell, 10 50112
- Feb. 17-25
Aurora, OR
- ANNUAL QUILT SHOW at Ox Barn Museum open 1-5 pm. Adm \$1.50 helps to support museum. Zion Mennonite Ladies will be quilting daily except Sundays. Feature: display of traditional hand weaving.
- Mar. 10-12
Corona, CA
- QUILT SHOW sponsored by the Women's Improvement Club. "Meet the Teachers Day" to meet quilting teachers from schools and shops located throughout the Southern Calif. Region. There will be quilts, boutique items, exhibitors, refreshments & quilt drawing. Hrs. Fri 12-8 pm, Sat & Sun 10-5 at 1101 S. Main St. For info and entry forms: 714/735-6775 or P.O. Box 188, Corona, CA 91720
- April 7-8
Idaho Falls,
ID
- FOURTH ANNUAL QUILT EXHIBIT sponsored by the Nimble Thimbles Quilt Club. To be held at Intermountain Science Experience Center. Special features: Maxine Teele's quilts and Mt. Mist quilts, including "Famous Women" contest quilt.
- Apr. 20-22
Rochester, MN
- QUILT EXHIBIT entitled "Hiawatha Land Quilt Faire" will feature new and old quilts. Held at Assissi Height Auditorium, 14th St. NW. Adm \$1.50 adults, 75 sr. citizens & children under 12. Six viewers' choice awards for contemporary & traditional designs. Demonstrations & patchwork items. For info: Mrs. Thomas Burson, 121-7th Ave. SE, Rochester, MM 55901
- Apr. 21,22
Lancaster CA
- ANTELOPE VALLEY QUILT FESTIVAL to be held at Antelope Valley College, Lancaster, CA from 10-4. Sponsored by Desert Alphas Auxiliary to Children's Home Society and Antelope Valley Quilters. Approx. 100 quilts. Demonstrations, fashion show, quilt drawing. Adm \$1.50 For info: Joan Hart, 44020 N. Gallon Ave., Lancaster, CA 93534