

# Textile Ecologies

February 5-7 2025 online



Lavanya Mani, *Signs Taken for Wonders*, 2009, Natural dye, applique, batik and machine embroidery on cotton fabric, 182.9 x 354.4. cm, Gallery Chemould Prescott Road © Lavanya Mani

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Juan Carlos Guerrero-Hernández  
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Deborah Jeromin

Inês Jorge  
Bellinda Widmann Kambili  
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Co-organized by Sylvia Houghteling and Vera-Simone Schulz



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## February 5-7, 2025

### SESSION I: MATTER AND MATERIALS

#### Chair: Janet Purdy (Art Institute of Chicago)

**Bio:** Janet Marion Purdy is the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow in Arts of Africa at the Art Institute of Chicago. Her research examines symbolic imagery and inscriptions on ornamentally carved doorways and thresholds in the Indian Ocean world, and related visual affinities in Afro-Arab-Asian artistic production and exchange. She is especially interested in the transmission of talismanic designs in their diverse protective functions across different mediums including textiles, jewelry, and woodworking. Janet was co-curator of *African Brilliance: A Diplomat's Sixty Years of Collecting* at the Palmer Museum of Art (2020) and assistant curator for *At Home In Africa: Design, Beauty, and Pleasing Irregularity in Domestic Settings* at Galleries at Cleveland State University (2014). Publications include catalogue entries in *African Brilliance* (2020) and *Speaking of Objects: Arts from Africa at the Art Institute of Chicago* (2020) and "Carved Designs and Thresholds in Indian Ocean Visual Affinities" in *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* (2022).

#### Parachutesilk

#### Deborah Jeronim (Leipzig/Crete)

In the end of the 1930ies mulberries were planted in a garden allotment in Germany in order to provide the only fodder for the silkworms – mulberry leaves. The breeding was exclusively meant for the fabrication of military parachutes. The Reichs airforce wanted to become independent from silk imports. The silkworm shed as well as the mulberry plants are still existent today and prove how war production took place in the small areas of everyday life. It never became efficient enough though to become relevant for the production of the parachutes, that required around 50 qm of best quality fabric each. But the propagandistic sericulture around the heroism of the paratroopers had reached school children, gardeners, women, injured and old people.

In May 20th 1941 the German air force invaded Crete in Greece with 10.000 paratroopers and occupied the Island for three to four years. Until the end of 1944 mass executions took place and many villages were burned down by the German Wehrmacht. Searching for the later use of the parachutes and the memories connected to the fabric, I interviewed Cretan Women, who made handkerchiefs and dresses from the parachutes. Through memorizing the textile handcraft processes the old women also remembered the terror of the German Wehrmacht on the Island. Most impressing were the memories inscribed in the bodies of the interview partners. The old women were gesturing up their memories. Their hands and bodies knew the production of a textile by heart. As the materials for demonstration were not existent anymore, they imitated even the working materials and tools with their hands.

The essay “parachutesilk” tells the history of the material – from the national socialist silkworm breeding in garden allotments to the Battle of Crete and the recycling of the parachutes as handkerchiefs and dresses by Cretan women. In my presentation I would like to give an insight in the research and focus on the relation of the involved people to their textile processes in a propagandistic program on the one hand and in a place of self-sufficiency and occupation on the other hand.

**Bio:** Deborah Jeromin is a visual artist who lives and works between Leipzig and Crete. She studied Media Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig and at Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland. Her works are based on site-specific research on historical topics. Her focuses on textile handicraft processes, feminist history, and places of National Socialism are, for example, juxtaposed in the artistic documentary film "parachute silk / Verwundene Fäden / Μπερδεμένες Κλωστές" (Riven Threads) or her book "Fallschirmseide / Μετάξι Αλεξίπτωτων" (parachutesilk) (Spector Books, 2020). Her work was shown at DOK Leipzig, in the Museum of Fine Arts in Leipzig (DE) as well as in the Festival 5+1 in Heraklion, Crete, and other places.

<http://deborahjeromin.net>

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## **‘African Wild Silk’: Waste Silk Supplement, Discourse, and Material, 1895-1932**

**Bellinda Widmann Kambili (Humboldt University Berlin)**

The historical waste silk textile fibre known as African Wild Silk, Anaphe Silk or African Waste was originally obtained primarily from moth species of the genus *Anaphe* (Notodontidae). The moth species collected in some colonial areas in response to the increasing demand in the European waste silk industry for cheaper substitute silks at the end of the 19th and early 20th century remain in the showcases of numerous natural history museums, rarely recognisable as natural history objects from the once flourishing trade in waste silk. The modern, economically motivated ideology of waste utilisation, which in the wake of the European silk crisis after 1850 specifically propagated a more efficient utilisation of silk fibres and the industrial introduction of substitutes, and other factors such as the mechanisation of spinning, led to European naturalists, sericulturalists, colonial trading companies and other actors discussing the technical and economic possibilities for processing and valorising of some non-releable silk cocoons of so-called Wild Silk moths native to some colonies for the waste silk yarn production, which had previously been considered economically and scientifically irrelevant to European industries. The economic and scientific discussion of potentially exploitable wild African silk cocoons led to practical trials at the beginning of the 20th century in the form of tentative creations of new economic geographies and specific working concepts. The interrelations between environmental deterministic theories, technology, culture, gender and race that can be found in the colonial silk industry concept mark not only the increased relevance of low-cost production in the history of the trans-imperial trade in waste silks, but also the associated suppression by African actors of multiple cultural and economic uses of the silk-spinning species. The thematic complexity of the material, is essayistically examined and related to each other on the basis of the remaining study and teaching materials, such as written records, lepidopteran species and silk textile samples from the Hausa and Yoruba, which still belong to the permanent collection

of some European natural history museums. The historical reconstructions contribute to the examination of the remaining and hitherto little studied epistemic fragments of the material history of African Wild Silks in terms of their significance within the trans-imperial history of waste silks.

**Bio:** Bellinda Widmann Kambili is pursuing her PhD studies in transcultural art history at Leuphana University Lüneburg. She holds a bachelor's degree in Asian and African Studies and a master's degree in Transdisciplinary Gender Studies/Gender Studies from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Humboldt University Berlin. Her research focuses on anaphe silk (so-called African wild silk), the visual and material culture of West and West Central Africa, the history of colonialism, the environmental humanities, and critical museology.

## **Polyester: A Genealogy of Comfort in the Fashion Industry**

**Airin Farahmand (Radboud University, the Netherlands)**

The invention of synthetic fabrics in the twentieth century and their gradual replacement of natural materials is a major milestone in the history of textiles, changing the meaning and the experience of clothing. Synthetic fabrics are one of the main factors responsible for the emergence of 'fast fashion', which exhausts landfills with excessive textile waste on a daily basis. Despite their short lifespan in the hands of consumers, synthetic fabrics operate on a geological temporal scale. Crude oil metamorphosizes into thread, weaving ancient history and present time together. The result is highly durable textiles that like most plastics are unlikely to decompose in the foreseeable future. The environmental harm induced by synthetic fabrics raises a simple, but crucial question: Why are synthetic fabrics so popular and why is it so difficult to replace them? This paper addresses this question by taking polyester as a representative case study of the global rise of synthetic fabrics. Since its invention in the mid-1930s, polyester has become one of the most widely used synthetic fabrics with applications ranging from sportswear to upholstery. Polyester quickly gained market popularity upon its introduction. Although it lost some appeal in the later decades of the twentieth century, it remains one of the most mass-produced synthetic fabrics, posing a serious environmental issue. In this paper, I argue that the production of 'comfort' as a socio-cultural value is at the heart of the long-standing popularity of polyester. Early polyester fabrics introduced new concepts to the fashion industry, such as comfortable 'stretchy' clothing and wash-and-wear fabrics, which were only a dream hitherto. Drawing on the archival materials of the chemical company Dupont, I will show how polyester was engineered to fit the emerging notions of comfort in affluent post-war American society and how it, in turn, redefined the collective meaning and imagination of comfort.

**Bio:** Airin Farahmand is a PhD candidate in the Cultural Studies Department at Radboud University, the Netherlands, where she also obtained her B.A. in Arts and Culture Studies and her Research M.A. in Culture Studies. Her main research interests lie at the intersection of feminist studies, science and technology studies, and material culture studies. In her dissertation, she explores plastic's vibrant cultural life in the contemporary world by investigating its rich material history, commodification, domestication, and commercialization. She treats plastic as a cultural artifact within modern consumer culture, emphasizing its role in shaping a global throw-away culture. Additionally, she is fascinated by artistic and speculative responses to the plastic crisis and the

potential of creative practices for imagining alternatives and forging radical collective actions. In her research, she strives to contribute to the ongoing debate on sustainable futures and highlight the importance of feminist future-making practices within that debate.

## SESSION II: COLLECTIVITY AND ECOLOGY

**Chair: Sylvia Houghteling (Bryn Mawr College, USA)**

**Bio:** Sylvia Houghteling is Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art at Bryn Mawr College where she specializes in early modern visual and material culture with a focus on the history of textiles, South Asian art, and the material legacies and ruptures of European colonialism. Houghteling's recent research has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend, the Yale University Art Gallery, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, and the Wolf Humanities Center at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *The Art of Cloth in Mughal India* (Princeton University Press, 2022), which received the Charles Rufus Morey Book Award (College Art Association), the R.L. Shep Memorial Book Award (Textile Society of America), and the Bernard S. Cohn Book Prize (Association for Asian Studies). She has published recent articles in *Marg*, and *21: Inquiries* and she serves on the editorial boards of the *Textile Museum Journal* and *Journal18*. Houghteling's ongoing research looks at the ecology and temporality of textiles dyes and the unique material histories of the eastern Indian Ocean trade.

### **Net Works: Global Handweaving Revival and Ecology in the Interwar Period**

**Antonia Behan (Queen's University, Canada)**

The term “ecology,” coined by biologist E. Haeckel (whose book illustrations became influential in the arts as inspiration for turn of the century ornament), took shape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to describe the relationship between an organism and its surroundings. It also shares, in its constituent roots (οἶκος), associations with the domestic space. Although the term “ecology” only became dominant later, concepts about “networks” of land, labour, and culture, of human and natural worlds were expressed by other terms, notably Sir Patrick Geddes’s “biotechnics.” In this paper, I expand the ideas preliminarily presented at the CAA Textile Ecologies panel to focus on how handweaving revival of the early twentieth century occupied a space between nature and the home by positioning textiles as an ideal medium through which to reshape landscapes, supply chains, and ecologies. Ethel Mairet’s (1872–1972) workshop was itself at the center of networks of women engaged in handweaving revival projects specifically within the context of rural reconstruction movements in Britain, America, India, and Iraq, which responded to the legacies of industrial capitalism including the loss of skill and technique, loss of biodiversity, and waste and pollution. Focusing on the “material imaginaries” of textiles as they embodied, reformulated, and expressed the interrelationships between history, culture, and nature, I will map and trace how these women used specific textile materials to actively reshape human and natural ecologies. I will also ask how these might be seen as early concepts of “sustainability” in their response to the effects of industrial capitalism, and how uncovering histories of sustainability might contribute to contemporary movements.

**Bio:** Antonia Behan is Assistant Professor of Design History and Material Cultures in a Global World at Queen's University, Canada. Her work focuses on textiles in Arts and Crafts and Modernism, with a particular focus on South Asia. Her current book project, *The Brain of the Machine:*



*Crafting Design between Britain and South Asia*, is a dual study of the English handweaver Ethel Mairet and the Anglo-Ceylonese art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy. She has published on weaving, dyeing, modernism, and contemporary craft in *Journal of Modern Craft* and other publications, and she also directs the SSHRC-funded *Global Legacies of Arts and Crafts* project gathering scholarship and resources on the Arts and Crafts movement in global context. In 2017, she was a participant in the “Weaving Knowledge” workshop organized by Dr. Pamela Smith, Dr. Annapurna Mamidipudi, Ms. Nussara Tiengkate in Chiang Mai, Thailand. She has held positions as research and curatorial fellow at the Bard Graduate Center and has experience in textile conservation in public and private collections. In addition to her research, she co-hosts Craft History Workshop, a virtual works-in-progress seminar that aims to expand research on histories of making and is a member of the Kingston Handweavers and Spinners Guild.

## **Healing Textiles – Towards New Human-Plant Collaborations**

**Katrin Seiler und Alexandra Weigand (The PLANTAE Institut, Germany)**

What alternatives can be thought of to counter current textile ecologies, in which 'value' creation is mainly based on monetary interests? What can we learn from the past, when textile production responded to a specific location and its environmental conditions? Textile traditions arose from the availability of certain plants and animals for the production of cotton, linen, wool, silk or dye plants such as indigo, woad and many others, which over time led to complex knowledge systems that linked humans, fauna and flora with the respective place.

This interconnectedness has been revitalised by post-humanist theories, with philosopher Rosi Braidotti for example advocating the coexistence of humans, non-humans and earth-others on an equal footing. Craig Holdrege suggests taking the principles of plants – “always in relation to the world into which it grows” (2013:1) – as a model to move beyond mere object thinking towards a participatory 'living thinking'.

How can these thoughts be applied to future textile ecologies? How can we combine local wisdom, scientific knowledge and applied (design) research to develop – or rather reactivate – new anthrocentric encounters and create new alliances between humans and plants as “agentic and active participants in socioecological systems” (Ryan 2011:110)? How can we partner with plants in the sense of “human-plant kinship” (Hall 2011) to find innovative and resilient answers to current (global) challenges (Mancuso 2018)?

With *HEALING TEXTILES*, a design research project launched in 2021, we aim to re-perspectivise textiles and clothing and create new synergies with plants by investigating the interplay of aesthetic dimensions and healing benefits on textiles in collaboration with local medicinal plants. Inspired by textile research in Nigeria (2019–2022) which exposed an interweaving of different cultural knowledge systems such as the link between textile production and medical knowledge, the transdisciplinary approach of this project also intends to explore new forms of knowledge generation in a glo-cal context. At the same time, we propose a new product culture that emphasises an expanded form of sustainability and incorporates the cultural aspect alongside ecological criteria as well as regional practices.

## Bios:

**Alexandra Weigand** is a designer and art historian and works as a researcher, curator, lecturer and writer. In her work, she combines design methods, technology and scientific research to build bridges between disciplines and create new synergies. She is co-curator of the research and exhibition project *FLOW OF FORMS / FORMS OF FLOW – Design Histories between Africa and Europe* (2016–2018) and co-editor of the eponymous publication. From 2017–2020 she was part of the international research project *Fashion and Styles in African Cities* at Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich, Germany, with a research focus on Lagos in Nigeria. With the Nigerian fashion label Lagos Space Programme, she experimented with cultural techniques around traditional textiles to create new aesthetics (2019–2021); the collaboration was showcased at Lagos Fashion Week and exhibited as part of the exhibition *Africa Fashion* at the Victoria & Albert Museum South Kensington (2021/22). From 2021–2022 she led the design research project *NEW PARAMETERS OF MAKING* in Nigeria, which explored the potential of cross-cultural design futures between Nigeria, Ethiopia and Germany (funded by the Federal Foreign Office). She is currently completing her doctoral thesis on fashion and agency in postcolonial Nigeria.

**Katrin Seiler** is a cultural theorist, lecturer and writer. She worked for UNIT F BÜRO FÜR MODE (A), a platform to promote and stimulate contemporary fashion design, for which she directed EU projects, publications and conceptualised exhibitions. As a brand communication expert she worked for Jil Sander, Giorgio Armani and Hugo Boss. Her own cultural projects focus on slow consumption and circular practices in the fashion market, such as the panel *WEAR NEXT* at the Textile Museum in Augsburg, Germany. In the art project *TRANSFUNGAL ENSEMBLAGE* she explored the biomateriality of mycelium and its intra-active becoming (Barad) in a human-non-human production process (with artist Chrismaria Pfeiffer, 2020/21). Her interest in plants, their agency and intelligence led her to train as an herbalist and phytotherapist in 2016. Particularly dedicated to wild and medicinal herbs she explores new links between traditional plant knowledge and cultural practices and aesthetics. In this context, she holds workshops and publishes in specialised journals.

**The PLANTAE Institute** was founded in 2023 by Alexandra and Katrin, building on the 2021–2022 *HEALING TEXTILES* project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, which draws on the antiviral, antibacterial and antimicrobial potential of dye plants in order to revitalise traditional knowledge for current challenges concerning health and environment. As a trans-disciplinary design research platform, the PLANTAE Institute engages in new forms of knowledge production, new processes as well as new product cultures and explores new ways of coexistence between humans and the environments.



## *Textiles, Ecology, and Resistance in Encoded Textiles' makuñ*

**Juan Carlos Guerrero-Hernández (University of Nevada-Reno)**

Despite textiles' central role in history, they remain invisible in art history and ecological humanities. As Virginia Postrel said, there is a "textile amnesia" we need to counteract. In this paper, I intend to contribute to this task by paying attention to *Encoded Textiles*, a series of pieces designed and produced in collaboration by Chilean (and Los Angeles-based) artist Guillermo Bert and different weavers on the American continent. I distance from the scant commentaries on *Encoded Textiles* that, unfortunately, tend to emphasize Bert's inclusion of QR Codes –connecting an old medium tradition and a new technology– while marginalizing the weavers' work and traditions.

Instead, I focus on the Mapuche pieces and Mapuche weaver Anita Pallamil, a leader in recovering Mapuche textile traditions forgotten by acculturation. I propose a close reading of pieces that intentionally remind us of the *makuñ* (mantel), one of the most celebrated Mapuche textiles and an embodiment of affection and power, and the *ñimin makuñ*, the type of textiles exclusively produced by a master weaver and expert in textile's structure and in cohesively connecting figures, colors, materials, and formats. As I show in this paper, each of the *Encoded Textiles' makuñ* is a poetic object dealing with history, lineage, and a decolonial struggle for the land, life, and ecological kinship in the Araucania.

It is worth noting that *Witral* (i.e., the Mapuche vertical loom) –which lends its name to Pallamil's collective of women weavers *Wallontu Witral*– has a significant etymology suggesting the act of growing like a tree and picking up the threads with which the garment will be woven from the ground up, in addition to pointing to the poetic gesture of weaving the universe on the loom. Noteworthy, the word Mapuche is derived from *Mapu*, meaning earth, land, and territory, and many of the geometrical motifs in *Encoded Textiles*, such as squares, diamonds, labyrinths, and triangles, are found in pictographs in Southern Chile and Argentina. The *makuñ* emphasizes labor as a figuration of how the Mapuche live, understand, and recreate themselves as part of a larger living universe.

The *makuñ* of *Encoded Textiles* (also including Mapuche poems linked via QR codes) emerged for such a rich context and powerfully addressed the Mapuche's historical and pressing political and environmental problems and challenges: from the arrival of the Europeans and ethnic cleansing and the genocide that forced native communities to inhabit the sacred places in the high mountains, to the contemporary struggles with the National States, deforestation and neocolonialism. The *makuñ* of *Encoded Textiles* reminds us that since Pinochet's time, the Chilean governments have strongly and decidedly supported the expansion of forestry companies around and in ancestral territories that those companies own and where they caused contamination, acidification, and replacement of the native and sacred forest with monocultures of exotic species.

More importantly, in *Encoded Textiles*, Pallamil reappropriated the tradition to remind viewers about the textiles' caring and healing force as poetic venues for storytelling, memory, reflection, resistance, redemption, and transcendence. Having women as the leading producers of textiles, Pallamil also seems to have appropriated the role of the *Machi* ('shaman') in such a way that, in addition to the QR codes connecting the wool and the virtual realm of information, introduced motifs of plants, for

instance, the *Aniimka*, and complex and mutable figures such as the *Lukutel* (ambiguously referring to a human figure and a plant) to underline the textile role in the Mapuche's vertical configuration of the universe connecting the *Nag Mapu* (the visible-physical world) and the *Wenu Mapu* (the world of the antecessors). In Pallamil's pieces, the weaver introduces us to the Mapuche's understanding of life and their historical and current processes of healing and self-transformation.

**Bio:** Juan Carlos Guerrero-Hernández is an Assistant Professor in Art History at the University of Nevada-Reno, a Ph.D. in Art History (Stony Brook University), and an M.A. in Philosophy (National University of Colombia). He writes about global contemporary art and culture, particularly on collective memory, testimony, decoloniality, and moving image. His work has been published in venues such as *TDR/The Drama Review*, *Photographies*, *Cinergie—Il Cinema e le altre Arti*, and edited books such as *Ventriloquism, Performance, and Contemporary Art* (Routledge 2023), *Pop Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), and *Walking with the Enemy: The Art of Subversive Mimicry in the Post-Truth Era* (Manchester University Press, 2024).

<https://www.unr.edu/art/people/juan-carlos-guerrero-hernandez>

<https://nevada-reno.academia.edu/JuanCarlosGuerreroHernandez>

## **SESSION III: Textile-Human-Relationships**

### **Chair: Carolyn Wargula (Bucknell University)**

**Bio:** Carolyn Wargula is Assistant Professor of Art History at Bucknell University. She is a specialist of Japanese Buddhist art with a focus on the materiality and intermediality of textiles, the social significances of the body, and the role of gendered ritual practices. Her forthcoming book project, *Embodied Embroideries: Gender, Agency, and the Body in Japanese Buddhism*, examines the mortuary practice of hair embroidery from the late twelfth- to the seventeenth-centuries to consider how the medium appealed particularly to women as a means to achieve enlightenment and to circumnavigate doctrinal teachings concerning the impurities of the female body. Professor Wargula was born in Japan and grew up in Okinawa and Sendai before moving to the United States at the age of sixteen. She received her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh and conducted archival research at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto as a Japan Foundation Dissertation Fellow. Prior to Bucknell, Professor Wargula taught courses on East Asian Art at Williams College and was a Postdoctoral Associate in the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University.

### **From Trash to Treasure: The Circulation of Human Hair in Textile Art**

#### **Yongxin Kong (Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, China)**

Among the natural and artificial fibers in the world, human scalp hair is a marginal and underestimated fiber in the field of textile study. Hair, when used as a thread, touches the essence of textile behavior, inciting humans' weaving desires to create objects with it. The process of growing, collecting, exchanging, and making with hair establishes an ecological circulation of what I call Hair Art, which refers to objects primarily made with human scalp hair.

Scalp hair is an important part of our body, serving both biological and cultural functions. It helps maintain our body temperature and protects the skin from sunburn, as well as showcases our fashion, identity, religions, and politics. The growth of hair is closely related to our body and environment. To keep healthy hair, we intentionally maintain good diet habits, use hair conditioner, and avoid direct sunlight or hairdryers. Hair holds considerable meaning for us, especially when it grows on our heads. But what happens when hair is detached from our bodies? For many, hair detached from the body is often regarded as trash. Collecting “trash” hair or harvesting hair is a key step, shifting hair from trash to an artistic, revitalized, valuable, and warm fiber for potential hair exchange and hairwork.

In this presentation, I argue that hair, as an active and warm fiber, with its particular materiality, is suitable for various textile behaviors such as weaving, knotting, knitting, crocheting, embroidering, lacing, and braiding. This special thread touches on the essence of textile behavior, as manipulating linear fibers is one of the most ancient human art practices. Cases ranging from ancient Chinese hair embroidery, 17th-century hair needle lace, 19th-century hair wreaths and hair jewelry, to recent

human hair sweater and fabric production will be analyzed. By examining these cases, this presentation discusses our empathy for waste hair, the reuse of hair, and the intelligence of artisans in textile making.

In conclusion, human scalp hair, often dismissed as trash when detached from the body, possesses remarkable potential as a textile material. By transforming discarded hair into art, we not only give new life to what is considered waste but also explore the rich cultural and historical significance embedded in this unique fiber.

**Bio:** Yongxin Kong is an art history Ph.D. candidate at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, China. Her scholarly interests focus on artistic research in fiber arts from the perspectives of global art history and technical art history. Her ongoing doctoral project, supervised by Prof. Yudong Wang and tentatively entitled *Art in Hair: Cases from (Post) Global Art History*, comprehensively explores theories, writings, artworks, and artistic practices related to human hair. The end result of the project will comprise a dissertation, a portfolio of interviews with hairwork practitioners and artists, and an exhibition of related artworks, including those made by herself. She is currently conducting research as an honorary visiting fellow at the Center for Design and Material Culture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. She presented the paper *Entangled: "Hair Art" from the Perspective of Global Art History* at the 36th CIHA Lyon 2024.

## **The Matter from a Matter. Contemporary Artistic Gathering as a Form of Textile Objects Creation**

**Magdalena Furmaniuk (University of National Education Commission, Kraków, Poland)**

The main aim of the paper is to present contemporary Polish textile objects that were made out of recycled materials, as forms of gathering. The three chosen works of art created by Małgorzata Niespodziewana, Ida Karkoszka and Marek Wodzisławski were made out of recycled materials such as human hair, second-handed and third-circulation clothes as well as animals' remnants. In other words, they were made out of waste, corpses and remains created/ throw out by the world of late modernity and capitalistic exploitation of the planet. The important factor of those creations is that not only a new matter is made from a different one, but also is made without causing any harm – not only to animals and people (obtained materials) but also to the environment and entire ecosystem, as artists do not create any additional waste. This circulation of materials, upcycled form of expression is connected with the acts of gathering, collecting and convening remains of self, animals and others.

Małgorzata Niespodziewana collects remains of herself – her own hair, and transit them into embroidery, commemorating the aging process. Ida Karkoszka's work is related to the act of gathering and convening scattered remnants of animals (fox's fur,) as a form of commemorating those victims and grappling with uneasy past of our grandmother's fashion and style. Finally, Marek Wodzisławski gathered the remains of humankind – third-circulation clothes that have made their way to landfill, once being the closest to a human body.

Each of the chosen work function as an overall manifestation of contemporary gathering (in their various forms). Selected works are at the same time examples of different approaches to gathering as a practices of saving, rescuing, re/membering or re/creating and manifests of recursive changing the world which created those wastes, remains and corpses. The author analyzes these cases using new materialistic perspective as well as haptic theory and ecology. The author looks at the process of creating a matter from matter, taking into account the emotional impact sewn into the sculptures as well as the idea of recursive manufacturing.

**Bio:** Magdalena Furmaniuk – art historian and theoretician, PhD candidate in Doctoral School at the University of National Education Commission in Kraków, working on thesis titled “The Body of the Textile. An Analysis of Soft-Sculpture and Textile Objects created after 2000’s in Poland.” In research she applies approaches of new materialism, feminisms, posthumanism and gender studies.

## SESSION IV: SEAS OF CLOTH

### **Chair: Dipti Khera (New York University)**

**Bio:** Dipti Khera is Associate Professor in the Institute of Fine Arts and Department of Art History at New York University. With interdisciplinary training in art history, museum anthropology, and architecture, her research and teaching on early modern South Asia integrate *longue durée* perspectives and Indian Ocean and Eurasian geographies. Khera's *The Place of Many Moods: Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's Eighteenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 2020) was awarded the Edward Cameron Dimock, Jr. Prize in Indian Humanities. Her co-edited volumes include the catalogue for the exhibition *A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur* (Hirmer Publications, 2022), which she co-curated at the National Museum of Asian Art, Washington DC and Cleveland Museum of Art; and two special issues, "The 'Long' Eighteenth-Century?" *Journal 18* (December 2021), and *Readings on Painting: From 75 Years of Marg*. Volume 74 No. 4 and Vol 75/ No 2. Mumbai: Marg Publications (June-September 2023). Most recently, Khera held the American Institute of Indian Studies-National Endowment for Humanities Senior Fellowship in affiliation with the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (2023-24).

### ***Nachu*, floating seaweeds of Machilipatnam: on Ecology and Signature Style**

#### **Rajarshi Sengupta (Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, India)**

A characteristic image that appeared in both hand drawn and block printed kalamkari textiles from the Coromandel coast of southern India is seaweed, or *nachu*, in Telugu. The geographical location of the Coromandel coast by the Bay of Bengal presented unique facilities and challenges, such as the availability of salt and sweet water in the canals, hot and humid weather throughout the year and two intense rainy seasons every year. The location, which also enabled and sustained oceanic and interregional trade connections, contributed to building a unique visual vocabulary for the Coromandel textile makers. *Nachu*, which manifests as an intricate web of stylised seaweeds in visuals, appears as a motif that is cherished by the woodblock carvers and printers of Machilipatnam even today. A number of historical painted trade textiles, however, display a more complex assertion of the *nachu* patterns within fruits and rocks, among other motifs. The intrinsic relationship between trade, ocean and textiles or transitory objects, as explored in recent scholarship (Avril and Barnes 2019; Barnes 2012; Crill 2006, 2008; Houghteling 2022; Machado, Fee and Campbell 2018), indicates the entangling of ecology, craft making and lived experiences. Building on this ongoing scholarly discussion on entanglement, also borrowing from Tim Ingold (2008), I situate the intertwined seaweed patterns of Machilipatnam at the crossroads of ecology and a characteristic visual style of this region. In my proposed paper, I will delineate the significance of coastal water, ecology and seasonal cycle and its role in constituting a unique coastal visual vocabulary or a signature style of the region, centring around the floating seaweed motif of Machilipatnam. Through this, I will also attempt to reflect on the methodological explorations around immersive visual analysis and sensory knowledge making.



**Bio:** Rajarshi Sengupta is a practitioner and art historian, presently teaching fine arts at the Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, India (2021). Sengupta completed his PhD in art history from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver (2019). He received the IARTS Textiles of India Grant, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (2017-18) and the Indo-Canadian Shastri Travel Grant (2023-24). Sengupta has published in *World Art*, *Journal18*, *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice*, and *South Asian Studies*, among others, and contributed to *Cloth that Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz*, ed. Sarah Fee (2020). His textile works are exhibited as part of *Varna(n)*, Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad (2021), *Crafting the Crossroad*, Dhi Artspace, Hyderabad (2022), and *Entwined*, Apparao Galleries, Chennai and New Delhi (2024).

## Stories of Salvage on the Brittany coast

### Cécile Borne (Brittany) and Maura Coughlin (Northeastern University, Boston)

The shoreline of Brittany and the long lives of textiles emerge as encultured ecologies and spaces of interwoven history in this collaborative talk. Visual and material histories and contemporary creative practice weave together as Maura Coughlin looks closely at 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century representations of the rag trade, textile repair and salvage in the photography of the Géniaux brothers on the Brittany coast (c. 1900) and in naturalist paintings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Her ecocritical research looks back on the historical flow of textiles (especially hemp and linen) through networks of maritime trade in Brittany, and their local histories of cultivation, manufacture and re-use. The historical, ecological entanglement of Breton communities and textiles comes from a time prior to the industrial ubiquity of cloth. In the contemporary disposal of textiles, whether intentional or accidental, many end up in the sea. Cécile Borne's contemporary installations, video work and performances use textiles gleaned from the tideline in Finistère, Brittany. Her practices of collecting, sorting and classifying ocean-imprinted cloth are forms of forensic restitution that permit the materials to tell stories of the bodies that once wore them. Together, Coughlin and Borne offer a meditation on ecologies of past textile production, the communities that made, used and salvaged these fibers from the wrack-line and their potential narratives of place-based knowledge.

### Bios:

Raised on the Brittany coast, artist Cécile Borne has been treasure-hunting since childhood. After studying Plastic Arts at the Sorbonne, she trained in contemporary dance in London and Paris. For several years, she has been working with memories and narrative evoked by stranded textiles that have thrown up by the sea. These fragments of fabric become the starting point for an exploration of the intimacy of the body and the social fabric. These humble relics, silent ruins, bear witness to a story without words. In assemblage, installation, performance and video, she works at the crossroads of dance, plastic arts, music and video and explores ecologies and constructs histories for these wasted fragments.

Art historian Maura Coughlin is Teaching Professor in the Department of Art + Design at Northeastern University in Boston, Mass. She is co-editor of *Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene in Nineteenth-Century Art and Visual Culture* (2019); her recent research is concerned with nineteenth-century French Atlantic visual culture, industrial agriculture, wastelands and ecological commons in Brittany and Normandy. She is a member of the Vienna Anthropocene Network and co-curated an exhibition devoted to visual and material cultures of seaweed in 2023 for the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

## **Session V: Textiles in Relation to the Earth and Oceans**

### **Chair: Vera-Simone Schulz**

**Bio:** Vera-Simone Schulz is W1 professor for transcultural art history at Leuphana University Lüneburg and associate researcher at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – MPI. Holding a PhD from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, she works at the crossroads of African, Islamic and European art histories and critical museology. Her research has been supported by the German Academic Scholarship Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service, the German Research Foundation, the Bard Graduate Center in New York City, and the University of Cambridge, among others. She is PI of “Material Migrations: Mamluk Metalwork across Afro-Eurasia”, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation (together with Gertrude Aba Eyifa-Dzidzienyo), and PI of “Epistemologies of Conviviality: Temporalities and Aesthetics of the Built Environment across the Horn of Africa and Beyond”, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (together with Elyas Abdulahi and Akram Elkhailifa) that include the research strands “Decentering Italian Colonial Heritage in Africa” and “Ecologies, Collections, and Contested Heritage: (Un-)Natural History and Italian Colonialism in Africa” (in collaboration with Jermy Michael Gabriel). Vera is co-founder and co-convenor of “Plants in Africa and Planetary Entanglements: Multi-Species Materialities, Ecologies, and Aesthetics (MMEA)” at the Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine (together with Jacques Aymeric and Abidemi Babatunde Babalola) and “Planetary Patchwork: Artistic Practices, Heritage, Epistemologies (together with Evi Olde Rikkert and Nicole Remus).

### **Indigo Waves: Intercontinental Textile Narratives**

#### **Zakiyyah Haffejee (Capetown)**

Let us embark on a journey that unravels the hidden stories woven within the fabric of our world. As Sarat Maharaj once pondered, “Textile art – who are you?” going on to suggest that we might understand textiles under the ‘chameleon figure’ of the ‘undecidable’, transcending boundaries and genres, stretching and reshaping our perceptions.

Indigo Waves explores the intricate narratives of the Indian diaspora in South Africa through textiles, focusing on the indigenous South African textile isiShweShwe. isiShweShwe is an indigo-dyed blueprint textile originating from Asia; it was adapted by Europe and reached the shores of Africa long before its craftsmen. The isiShweShwe print represents a significant historical remnant of an intercultural past, with Pan-African, Eastern and Western dimensions testifying to a history of encounters and exchanges between humans across the globe.

My research examines the historical trajectory of isiShweShwe, highlighting the interconnectedness of textile production, cultural exchange, and environmental impacts.

Textile production is deeply entwined with colonial histories, often resulting in the exploitation of both human and natural resources. Indigo Waves sheds light on the colonial legacies of environmental harm and the unequal distribution of ecological consequences. The ecological

footprint of textile production is profound, involving the transplantation of indigo plants and extensive use of natural resources for dyeing processes. These practices have historically reshaped landscapes and ecosystems. By examining the socio-political dimensions of isiShweShwe, my research explores how colonial exploitation and ecological racism have shaped the textile industry. It analyses how the cultivation and processing of indigo and the production of indigo-dyed textiles have led to significant environmental transformations.

Using isiShweShwe as a case study, my research highlights the cultural resilience and adaptability of the Indian diaspora in Africa. Textiles serve as a medium for preserving and reinterpreting cultural identities in post-colonial contexts. Indigo Waves aims to engage diverse audiences in a dialogue about textile production's historical, cultural and ecological dimensions and contribute valuable insights to textile ecologies, fostering a deeper understanding of cloth's past, present, and potential futures.

**Bio:** Zakiyyah Haffjee is an architect and researcher based in Cape Town. She holds an undergraduate degree in architecture from the University of Johannesburg and an MA in Architecture from the Royal College of Art. Her work draws on themes of gender, identity and spirituality, often focusing on rituals and uncovering meaning through language, history and religion. Zakiyyah currently teaches at the University of Cape Town and has previously contributed at Wolff Architects, Counterspace Studio, and the Archive of Forgetfulness.  
<https://2023.rca.ac.uk/students/zakiyyah-haffjee/>

## **Textured Images: An Ecology of Textiles and Threads in African Photography**

### **Sandrine Colard and Giulia Paoletti**

This paper explores the ecological entanglement of textile and photography in the works of modern and contemporary African practices, including Seydou Keita, Zohra Opoku and Monica de Miranda.

Textile backdrops in African studio portraits were imported from Europe—the United Kingdom, Switzerland and more—and often displayed natural world's motifs that connected the commercial routes of capitalism while spreading ecological imaginaries across colonial borders. Yet also, the famous Malian Seydou Keita developed his signature style by composing photographic portraits against backdrops made of cotton printed textiles with floral patterns that both abstracted and decolonized their sitters in the era of Independence.

Today, artist Monica de Miranda creates installations such as *Salt Island* (2022) where her photographs of the environment are embroidered to mark species of trees and chart these landscapes that become three-dimensional. Zohra Opoku experiments with natural dyes using indigo in her screenprints and photographic tapestries to reflect and materialize her family ties and memories. While different in their methodologies and aesthetics, these artists share an engagement with their environment, whether photographed, abstracted or distilled, through textile to create new imaginaries.

This study is part of a larger ongoing research and exhibition project which considers photography's—material and theoretical—entanglements with textile across histories and geographies, taking the African continent as its nexus.

#### **Bios:**

**Sandrine Colard** is Assistant Professor of African Art History. She holds a Ph.D. in art history from Columbia University, and a M.A. in Africana Studies from New York University. Prior to joining Rutgers-Newark, she was a post-doctoral fellow at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA, Paris, France) and a Provost Post-doctoral Fellow at the NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Dr. Colard is a historian of modern and contemporary African arts and photography, with a focus on Central Africa. Her scholarly interests include post-colonialism in the arts, portraiture, vernacular photograph, the representation of gender and domesticity, and the globalization of the contemporary art scene. Dr. Colard is an international lecturer (Concordia University, EHESS, Wiels, Bozar, European Parliament) and the author of multiple publications (*African Arts*, *Critical Interventions*, *L'Art Même*, *Cahiers du CAP*, *Cultures et Musées*). Her writings include contributions to exhibition catalogs such as *Sammy Baloji: Hunting and Collecting. A Research Project* (Mu.ZEE, Ostend, 2016), and *The Expanded Subject: New Perspectives in Photographic Portraiture from Africa* (Hirmer, 2016), for which she was co-curator at the Wallach Art Gallery (New York, 2016). Her research has been supported by numerous fellowships, among which that of the quai Branly Museum. Based on research conducted in Belgium, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi (DRC), her current book project examines the history of photography in the colonial Congo (1885-1960).

**Giulia Paoletti** is a historian and curator of art and photography with a focus on nineteenth and twentieth century African art. Her book *Portrait and Place: Photography in Senegal, 1840-1960* (Princeton University Press, 2024) offers the first extended study of photography in one of Africa's epicenters of modernity. The book was awarded the 2024 Photography Network Book Award. Her work has appeared in edited volumes and journals including *Art History*, *Cahiers d'études africaines*, the *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, *Art in Translation*, *Journal of African History*, *Troubles dans les collections and African Arts* and *MoMA Post*. Support for her research and writing include awards and fellowships from American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS)/Getty; The Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA); the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. She has co-curated three exhibitions on historical and contemporary photography from Africa at the Metropolitan Museum, the Wallach Gallery and Dak'art Biennial OFF 2018. She has taught and lectured at Columbia University, Pratt Institute, the University of Kansas, the Barnes Foundation, and the University of Bologna. At UVA, Paoletti teaches undergraduate and graduate classes on Africa's histories of photography, modern and contemporary art, classical arts and exhibition histories. Currently, with Dr. Sandrine Colard, she is working on her second research project on the relation between photography and textile.

## Session VI: Textiles, Cultural and Ecological Heritage

### Chair: Nicholas Robbins (University College London)

**Bio:** Nicholas Robbins is a Lecturer in British Art 1700-1900 in the History of Art Department at UCL. His research and teaching explore the visual cultures of the modern Atlantic world, with a focus on the intersections of art history with histories of science and the environment. His first book, *The Late Weather*, traces climate's emergence as a central subject of scientific representation and artistic experiment in nineteenth century Britain. He has published articles in *Art Bulletin* and *Oxford Art Journal*. He received his BA and PhD in art history at Yale University. Before joining the UCL History of Art Department in 2020, he worked at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Yale Center for British Art, and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. In 2023-24, he was a member at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. He is a member of the editorial group of the *Oxford Art Journal*.

### Can Textiles Patch the Sky They Burnt? Yin Xiuzhen's Sky Puzzle (2015)

#### Yang You (Shanghai)

In her installation *Sky Puzzle* (2015), artist Yin Xiuzhen (b. 1963) created a myriad of fabric suitcases. They replicate the signature buildings in the capital cities of twenty powerful countries most severely affected by climate change, or the "G20". Hanging upside down from the ceiling, these soft sculptures are made with recycled textiles from used clothes that the artist sourced from these countries' residents through their embassies and cultural institutes in Paris. Contributing to the "Artists 4 Paris Climate 2015 initiative", Yin created this piece in support of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris in 2015. While 196 countries signed the Paris Agreement at the conference, pledging to limit the increase in global temperatures within 2 degrees and diminish the emission of greenhouse gases, a report published by Climate Action Tracker (CAT) in 2021 indicated that none of the nations, including all of the G20 countries, met the goals. Against this background, this paper seeks to revisit Yin's installation *Sky Puzzle* (2015), focusing on the agency of textiles and the transformative exchanges between clothes and the people who wear them. I will closely analyze how the artist engages with the materiality of textiles, the symbolic values of iconic architecture, and premodern cosmologies to bring awareness to the ecological footprints of the textile and clothing industries. Consulting theories of new materialism, I consider the agency that the artist granted the used clothes in this piece and their interactions with the viewers in the spaces of the two locations where the work was exhibited (one of the Terminals at Charles de Gaulle Airport in 2015 and the Centre for Heritage, Arts, and Culture in Hong Kong in 2021). Inspired by T. J. Demos's introduction, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology," written for the special issue he edited for *Third Text* in 2013, this paper will also examine the ways in which this work mediates across subjective, social, and environmental registers.

**Bio:** Yang You is an art historian and independent curator based in Shanghai. She received her B.A. with Honors in Art History from the University of Rochester in 2010 and an M.A. in Art History



from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2013. She worked as a director at leading galleries in Shanghai and has prior internship and work experience at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Christie's New York office, and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Her research interest includes contemporary art, media studies, and critical theory. Currently, she is working on a research project focusing on the experimental works that employ threads, cords, used clothes, textiles, and assorted fabrics created by artists in China in the 1990s.

## **“Upcycled Blues”: Collective Quilting on Tripoli’s Syria Street**

**Jessica Gerschultz (University of St Andrews)**

Eleven quilts, exhibited at the Agial Gallery in Beirut in July 2024, enact a suturing. Sewn, beaded, and embroidered by a group of women in the northern port city of Tripoli, Lebanon, these three-dimensional textiles signal the collective reimagination of a community. The quilters engaged familial art practices, Tripoli’s former garment industry, and collaborative process to reconcile with violence, migration, and injustice wrought by past and present conflicts linking Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. They crafted narratives about resilience, fictive female characters, and the protection of vulnerable ecological, marine, and cultural heritage. Stitching on the border of Syria Street, which has separated the communities of Jabal Mohsen and Bab el Tabbeneh since the 1970s, the group envisioned restorative and sustainable connectivity through the design and fabrication of highly textured wall hangings made from upcycled fabrics. This nascent project, supported by Ruwwad Al Tanmeya and Bokja, vivifies enduring, gendered histories of quilting, social class, and textile art more broadly.

### **Bio**

Jessica Gerschultz is Lecturer in the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews and a Senior Humanities Research Fellow at New York University Abu Dhabi (2023-2024). Her research examines modern and contemporary fiber art, artistic engagement with craft-based mediums, and feminist art histories, with a focus on the Arab world and Africa. She was an American Council of Learned Societies Fellow in 2016 for the writing of her first book *Decorative Arts of the Tunisian École: Fabrications of Modernism, Gender, and Power* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), which received the CAA Millard Meiss Publication Award and the University of Kansas Vice Chancellor for Research Award. She has published numerous articles and essays, including in *Making Modernity: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century Islamic Mediterranean* (Indiana University Press, 2022), *Under the Skin: Feminist Art and Art Histories from the Middle East and North Africa Today* (Oxford University Press, 2020), *The Journal of Modern Craft* (2020), and *The Art Salon in the Arab Region: Politics of Taste Making* (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 2018).

## Session VII: Matter and Ornament

### Chair: Sarah Fee (Royal Ontario Museum/University of Toronto)

**Bio:** Dr. Sarah Fee is Senior Curator of Global Fashion & Textiles at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. She is responsible for the museum's renowned collection of ca. 15,000 textiles and fashion that come from greater Asia and Africa, as well as eastern Europe. Fee's fascination with textile making and dress first grew during four years of doctoral field research in southern Madagascar, where she learned to spin, dye and weave. In addition to Madagascar, her multi-disciplinary research focuses on the textile and dress traditions of the wider western Indian Ocean world, which embraces southern Arabia, eastern Africa and western India. She has edited and written for numerous books, journals and catalogues, including *Objects as Envoys: the Textile Arts of Madagascar* (2002), *Textile Trades, Cultures of Cloth, and Material Worlds of the Indian Ocean* (2018), "The Translocal Textile Trades of Eastern Africa," a special volume of *Textile History* (2017), and *Cloth that Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz* (2020). Her research has been supported by grants from the Smithsonian Institution, The Wenner Gren Foundation, The Pasold Fund, and the Social Science and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Her recent exhibition projects include "Cloth that Changed the World: India's Painted and Printed Cottons," "Born of the Indian Ocean: The Silks of Madagascar," and "BIG." Before joining the ROM, she guest-curated "Gifts & Blessings, the Textile Arts of Madagascar" (NMAfA, Smithsonian Institution) and co-founded the Tandroy Ethnographic Museum (Berenty, Madagascar). Dr. Fee is cross-appointed to the Art Department, University of Toronto. She is a Chercheuse Affiliée at the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris), a Research Associate at the Indian Ocean World Centre (McGill University), a Senior Fellow of Massey College, and currently serves on the editorial board of the *Textile Museum Journal*.

### Mad for Madder: A Dye that Crossed the Ocean

#### Maria Gajewska (University of Cambridge)

Block printed textiles made in Gujarat between the 10<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries were exported across the Indian Ocean, from Egypt to Indonesia. Their style, distribution, chronology and regional variation have been studied at length. By contrast, the technical and material aspects of these objects remain somewhat unexplored. This paper focuses on one of the three dominant colours of the textiles – red – and considers where the dye used for this hue was obtained. By revising the results of chemical analysis previously published by Ruth Barnes and comparing them with historical data on dye export and experimental data on dyeing cotton, it concludes that the red used for most block-printed textiles exported from Gujarat across the Indian Ocean may have come from madder (*Rubia tinctorum*) imported from Yemen.

Considering the substantial number of red and white and red, white and blue textiles found to date, as well as the relatively small number of raw materials which go into producing them (cotton, bleaching agent, blue dye, red dye, mordant), this is a substantial contribution to the productive process. The fact that local alternatives (including another species of madder, *Rubia cordifolia*) were available in India points to the perception of a trans-oceanic source of dye as highly accessible. The

use of Yemeni madder (and perhaps Yemeni mordants) suggests that the artisans who produced these textiles at least sometimes viewed trans-oceanic locales as part of “their”, familiar environment, readily available for exploitation and integration into the making of non-luxury goods.

**Bio:** Maria Gajewska is an archaeologist specialising in the medieval Middle East and the maritime Silk Road. She is currently finishing a PhD on the cultural, social and political impact of maritime trade across the western Indian Ocean littoral between the 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries at the University of Cambridge. She is also working as Late Pre-Islamic/Early Islamic Archaeologist with the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi. Maria has excavated across the Middle East, North and East Africa. In addition to her PhD, her ongoing projects include a reassessment of the *chaîne opératoire* of medieval Gujarati block-printed textiles (a topic which she has most recently presented at the CIHA annual symposium in Lyon) and editing a monograph on the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century Christian church and monastery on Sir Bani Yas Island, UAE.

## **The Power of Textiles: The Landscape Dress of Elector John George I of Saxony as an Economic Symbol of his Territorial and Socio-Cultural Wealth**

**Jennifer Konrad (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany)**

Historical textile artworks from the Middle Ages and the early modern period are still a marginal field of research in art history. Yet their aesthetic, functional and symbolic significance is of great relevance in order to fully grasp the understanding of courtly representation and the artistic rhetoric of claims to power. The economic significance of ceremonial dress in particular, which was often not intended to be worn, has hardly been examined to date. A remarkable example of this is the landscape dress of Elector Johann Georg I of Saxony, which was made by Hans Erich Friese in 1611.

Made from Italian silk, the garment bears witness to the cultural exchange between Electoral Saxony and Italy, which was significantly promoted by Johann Georg's trip to Italy in 1601. At the same time, the landscape dress opens up a multi-layered view of the real and symbolic economy of the textiles used. On the one hand, the production of clothing made of silk, precious stones and pearls required the procurement of precious and rare resources, which necessitated good economic relations and even exploitation. On the other hand, the symbolism of the landscape dress reflects the fertility, availability and territorial claim of the elector. Rich, prosperous landscapes are embroidered in the border, reflecting the prosperity of the court and the citizens alike. Such depictions can already be found in the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duke of Berry, whose miniatures show a stable dominion with happy, well-fed citizens.

The staged availability of resources in art made it possible to use this real wealth for the production of works of art and ceremonial textiles. This gives rise to an iconography of raw materials that extends from the production process to the finished representational object and manifests itself in the figurative landscape embroideries. By wearing the landscape dress, the symbolic territories of the embroideries merge with the real territories: The elector carries his own country on his shoulders, with his head forming the center of the landscape dress and his realm. This lecture would like to

explore the idea of a prince as an economic center and its symbolic radiance as a performative moment.

**Bio:** Jennifer Konrad holds an MA and a PhD in art history from the University of Mainz, Germany, with a PhD thesis on “architecture as visual disturbance on the relationship between building form and perception in deconstructivism.” She is the winner of the Deubner Project Prize 2019, held a fellowship of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and was a junior member of the Gutenberg Academy of the University of Mainz. She is currently working on her habilitation project on “representations of eroticism and sexuality in the transition period from manuscript to print.”

## **Session VIII: Textiles, Sustainability, and Memory**

### **Chair: Mei Mei Rado (Bard Graduate Center)**

**Bio:** Mei Mei Rado is Assistant Professor at the Bard Graduate Center, New York. Rado is an art historian specializing in textile and dress history, with a focus on China and France from the eighteenth- through early twentieth-century. Her research, writing, and teaching foreground the relation of global networks to locally defined cultural systems. Her work and pedagogy combine solid knowledge of materials and making with interpretive paths informed by multiple cultural perspectives. Rado's research concerns the movements and transformations of textiles and dress (both as objects and as images and ideas) in the early modern and modern periods. Her forthcoming book *The Empire's New Cloth: Cross-Cultural Textiles at the Qing Court* (Yale University Press, 2025) investigates European silks and tapestries that entered the Chinese court and Qing imperial productions inspired by European models. It recounts a multipolar story from both cultural ends, showing how objects, styles, and images travelled in multiple directions replete with reinvented meanings. Her additional publications include studies of interior draperies in eighteenth-century France, 1920s French textiles and fashion, chinoiserie and Japonisme fashion, twentieth-century Chinese textiles and fashion, as well as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Qing court arts. Before joining BGC, Rado was Associate Curator of Costume and Textiles at LACMA, and she previously held fellowship positions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, and the Palace Museum, Beijing.

### **Dyed in Tradition and Sustainability: Unraveling the Intersection of Textile Production and Ecological Practices in Bunkure, Kano, Nigeria**

#### **Rabiu Yusuf (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria)**

This paper is a preliminary report of the first season of an ethnoarchaeological investigation of the textile production in Bunkure town in Kano, Nigeria. It seeks to investigate the ecological implications of the textile production and to identify sustainable ecological practices over time and spaces. Interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, material analysis and local plant species used in the textile production were used to gather data for the research and two (2) dyeing centers were investigated- *Galadanchi* and *Kofar Yamma*. So far, the chaîne-opératoire of the textile production was documented and the paper highlighted the intricate the relationship between textile production, ecological practices and sustainability. By documenting the traditional methods and identifying sustainable ecological alternatives, aspect of the strategies for environmentally-conscious textile production were also highlighted. Preliminary results indicated a high-water usage and waste generation in dyeing process and the exclusive use of local plant species (*Indigo-Baba*) that carries symbolic and medicinal value. The paper discusses the preliminary outcome of the research and its significance to our understanding of the archeology of textile industries in Kano and Hausaland in general.

**Bio:** Rabiul Yusuf is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, and a doctoral fellow of the Material Migrations project, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. His research focuses on the material culture of Northern Nigeria, archaeology, and critical museology, with a particular emphasis on two groups of objects: metalwork and textiles. In his PhD thesis, he studies the iron smelting technology at Zangon Tama in Sokoto State, Nigeria, through the analysis of iron smelting residues and metal objects. The research explores the historical significance of iron smelting sites in Sokoto and other sites around the Durbi Ta Kusheyi site where the Mamluk metal objects were identified, highlighting their role in the interaction between Sub-Saharan Africa and the wider world, including North Africa. By employing material science analysis, his research aims to enhance our understanding of iron technology and its interaction with the external world. Transregional connections are also at the core of his collaborative project on indigo in Northern Nigeria, focusing on material remains, artistic practices and techniques, the display of indigo fabrics in museum contexts, and indigo production as a living heritage.

## **Kandyan Ecologies, Kandyan Style: Sri Lankan Craft and the ‘Asian’ Episteme** **Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi (Barnard College)**

Through the recurring ambition to critically center Asian handloom as an epistemic source for architectural history, this paper examines relations between ecologies, craft practices, and societies in the villages around Kandy, Sri Lanka. Interpretations of the ecologies and social systems behind hereditary weaving traditions in the Kandyan kingdom’s Dumbara valley presented crises for the weaver throughout the twentieth century, constituting core concerns in art and architectural theory. To understand this, the paper traces the conceptualization of an Asian episteme in five practices, beginning with Ananda Coomaraswamy’s 1908 *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, which interprets Kandyan textiles, among other focal objects. The second is that of Ethel Coomaraswamy (later Mairet), who prefaced her career in weaving by producing the book’s pictorial heart, photographing the bodies and works of Kandyan craftspeople. The third, Anil de Silva-Vigier’s art historical studies half a century later, critically imagined a world heritage of monumental landscapes into which the landscape architectures in and around Kandy were folded. The fourth, of architect Minnette De Silva, juxtaposed the iconic woven Dumbara mat with modern architectural designs. The Dumbara weavers’ practice is the fifth, which assumed symbolic value during Sri Lanka’s civil war.

The paper considers these material and intellectual practices as anchoring an Asia-centered episteme at multiple moments, analyzing in each the recurrences and coherences of a concern with craft ecologies negotiated by Kandyan weavers. How the Dumbara mat—an object of caste-based labor that is again dying out—repeatedly serve as a critical epistemic source is as central to this paper’s query as is the existential threat to the environment that brought it into being. This environment of Kandyan kingdom land grants created physical, economic, and social enclosures in which handloom production has flourished at the expense of its fabricators. If the Kandyan style came into its own logic in the object of the Dumbara mat and sister textiles, then an inviability of Kandyan ecologies



behind them must also contribute to the logic of an “Asian” episteme grounding architectural history.

**Bio:** Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi is an architectural historian at Barnard College, Columbia University, and author of *Architecture of Migration: The Dadaab Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Settlement* (Duke University Press, Theory in Forms, 2024), on the spatial politics, visual rhetoric, ecologies, and long colonial traditions of the UNHCR-administered camps at Dadaab, Kenya. Siddiqi is the co-editor of *Feminist Architectural Histories of Migration and Spatial Violence*. Her book manuscript *Ecologies of the Past: The Inhabitations and Designs of Anil and Minnette de Silva* analyzes the politics of heritage environments through the work of Sri Lankan architect Minnette de Silva and art historian Anil de Silva-Vigier.

## **‘Cloth Travels’: Journeys of Fabrics Across the Portuguese City of Guimarães in Ann Hamilton’s Side-by-Side Installation for the Contextile Biennial (2018)**

### **Inês Jorge (University of Birmingham)**

This paper examines *Side-by-Side*, a site-specific installation devised by artist Ann Hamilton for the fourth edition of *Contextile: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, and exhibited between 1 September and 20 October 2018 in the Portuguese city of Guimarães. *Side-by-Side* established circuits of images, fabrics, and sounds across different spaces in Guimarães – the former hub of the Portuguese textile industry, along with the wider region of Vale do Ave. As shown by its title, Hamilton’s project endeavored to evidence the side-by-side, or closeness, between various living beings, sensations, objects, practices, and sites. My analysis of *Side-by-Side* reveals that the installation incorporated textiles and other items to evoke broader legacies of empire and colonialism in Guimarães and Vale do Ave. For example, Hamilton’s juxtaposition of prints of objects from several museum collections and geographical origins – from locally embroidered shirts to African masks – in the same space, brought to mind the way in which the textile industry in Guimarães and Vale do Ave relied on the enforced cultivation of cotton in the former colonies of Angola and Mozambique. This allowed the Portuguese to buy low-priced raw cotton from these overseas territories, produce saleable items from this raw material, and then sell high-priced cotton fabrics to them. By recalling the exploitation of human and natural resources in Angola and Mozambique, *Side-by-Side* suggested the persisting need to address the wider impact of the Portuguese textile industry, not only on the local population, but also on those who were coerced to harvest cotton in Angola and Mozambique.

**Bio:** Inês Jorge holds a PhD in History of Art from the University of Birmingham, with a thesis examining craft-based exhibitions of contemporary art held in Portugal and the UK between 2012 and 2022. Her research has been published in peer-reviewed publications such as *The Journal of Modern Craft* and *Journal of Curatorial Studies*.