



Objects from Indigenous and World Cultures: Conservation Newsletter

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Newsletter foreword

by Sabine Cotte

First I wish to extend a warm welcome to all the members of the Working Group Objects from Indigenous and World Cultures to the new triennial 2023-2026. We are happy to present the new team of Assistant Coordinators, with new members Elisa Palomino Perez and Mamta Pandey joining Lucie Monot and Misa Tamura. This is also the opportunity to thank Ana Carolina Delgado Vieira and Saiful Bakhri for their great work as Assistant Coordinators during the last triennial. Ana in particular has been Assistant Coordinator for three consecutive triennials during which she has managed the group's Facebook Page, contributed to the reference list on pesticides previously or currently used for treatment of Indigenous Objects. This list is being updated and shared with our colleagues from Natural History Collections Working Group, who will also contribute to it.

Following the planning session at the conference in Valencia, where the members present stated that they would like to have discussion sessions in a relatively loose format in order to be relaxed and encourage everyone's participation, we have designed a program for the group for this triennial which is exciting, with many different activities.

We are planning to have online workshops to address the following themes, requested by the members

- Collaboration with communities, community access to collections and inclusiveness in conservation decision-making
- Transgenerational inclusivity, multiplicity of stories from one community; engage in objects preservation with diaspora, displaced and migrant population
- Education, especially with respect to empowering communities to preserve their own objects and places
- Training and education for inclusivity and sustainability in conservation practices
- Local systems of knowledge and their roles in conservation

The format of these workshops will be 1hour online round tables with short presentations (12mn) and moderated open discussion via Zoom, each on one of the above themes. The workshops will be open to non ICOM members as well. We are aiming at 2 workshops/year if possible. Given the number of Spanish-speaking members in our group, we are also planning to organise one workshop in Spanish, to be held around October this year.

The first workshop is planned for 20 June 2024, on the theme 'Community access to collections and inclusiveness in conservation decision-making'. We are delighted that three very experienced guest speakers have accepted to join us for this workshop. You can find more information on our webpage and facebook page so you can save the date and register. This will be an informal and non-judgemental atmosphere and we are hoping for a dynamic discussion with audience members after the short presentations of our guest speakers sharing their experience in this field. The workshop will be recorded. For privacy reasons, the recordings will only be accessible for a limited time (3

months until 30th September 2024) and only for the people who have registered online. There will also be a summary on the Facebook page and in our following newsletter.

You can find the triennial program on our page on the ICOM CC website. Please let us know if you wish to be a speaker or can suggest someone as speaker for the following workshops (our contact emails are on the website and at the end of the newsletter).

In addition to the workshops, we plan to update the pesticide reference list, and create new lists of references to be available as a resource on the website (protocols for consultations/collaboration with communities, ethical texts, consolidants reviews); publish one newsletter/year; and actively prepare our session in the next Triennial Conference in Oslo (Norway) in September 2026.

I also wish to thank the contributors to this newsletter: Nicole Kruger shares a summary of her Masters' research on bleeding dyes on traditional huipiles from Guatemala, Lou Laurent writes about her bachelor's project on the designing of large-scale objects' storage mounts with a reflection on their ecological footprint.

You will also find a review of the last triennial conference in Valencia by Lucie Monot and a profile of our new Assistant Coordinators Elisa and Mamta.

Wishing you a good reading and looking forward to hear about more projects in the online discussions and in the following newsletters.

20th ICOM-CC Triennial Conference Review

by Lucie Monot

Sustainability was the keyword of last ICOM-CC Triennial Conference. The diversity of applications of this concept inspired speakers to explore the many ways in which it can be understood in their professional contexts. Throughout the conference, issues relating to the sustainability of the profession, from education to its role in the heritage field, rubbed shoulders with the questioning of principles in relation to sustainable development and environmental issues. I would like to take this opportunity to outline a few highlights of this week.

Under the title *Working toward a Sustainable Past*, the conference held in Valencia, Spain, between 18 and 22 September 2023, brought together some 876 conservators and other museum professionals from more than 67 countries around the world. Two and a half days were devoted to the presentation of selected papers, divided into five different sessions that were run simultaneously by the 21 ICOM-CC's working groups. Technical visits to a large variety of heritage institutions were offered to participants on Wednesday afternoon while Monday and Friday were devoted to plenary sessions that gathered the whole community.

On Monday, the 18th, we were brought all together in the spectacular Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia to kick off the conference, introduced by our host in Valencia, Salvador Muñoz-Viñas, Professor at the Universitat Politècnica de València and coordinator of this 20th Conference. After ICOM-CC General Assembly and a presentation by Stitching ICOM-CC Fund, Luis Monreal gave the ICOM-CC Triennial

Lecture on *The Challenges of conserving cultural heritage in conflict zones*. His inspiring lecture was based on his work in Syria and Afghanistan as General manager of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. Through very concrete facts and examples of building complex reconstruction and urban rehabilitation, he proved evidence of how preserving or rebuilding heritage is entangled with economic and cultural recovery and sustainability, mainly through the creation of local competence. After lunch break, keynote speaker Sophia Labadi, Professor of Heritage at the University of Kent (UK), focussed her talk on her research on issues emerging from tensions between sustainable development, international aid, and world heritage, based on her work as consultant for international organisations and governments. She was also one of the six panellists invited to discuss *Sustainability & Conservation*, together with Anupam Sah, Jane Henderson, Abba Isa Tajani, Laura Melpomeni Tapini and Salvador Muñoz-Viñas. Thanks to their diverse backgrounds, they introduced the many ways in which sustainability can be understood particularly in relation to conservation, and the tensions facing the profession. This was also highlighted through the audience's questions and remarks. One of them raised the question of the justification for heritage preservation in the face of the environmental and social crises of our times.

For the Friday's plenary session on the theme *Museum as Influencers: The Agency of Conservation and Conservators*, ICOM-CC invited two sister organisations, IIC and ICCROM to make a joint commitment for climate action, also inviting the audience in a discussion on ICOM Action Plan for Sustainable Development. From the many comments and questions from the audience it emerged that conservators are already highly aware of their agency in their own practice. They are already influential in their institution from the ground up, but they are hoping for a committed support on an organisational level to advocate these concerns within the museum world. There were also calls for more inclusivity and kindness in such large conferences and among each other. Although English has become the main professional language, not everyone is fluent in it. This, combined with the cost induced from participating in such large events, doesn't allow everyone to feel included. Those who do overcome their apprehension to come out should at least be guaranteed to be treated kindly, even if opinions, experiences and ideas may differ.



Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in the City of Arts and Sciences, Valencia (Photo L.Monot)

Between Artistry and Accident: Investigating the Intentionality of Dye Bleeding in Six Huipiles from The Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen

by Nicole Kruger Valerio

Master's Thesis Research Project

Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, Specialisation Textiles

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The research presented here is part of a larger master thesis, written under the supervision of Dr. Ana Serrano (Kruger 2023) This project focuses on dye bleeding phenomena found in garments, namely huipiles, originating from the Quiche Maya communities of Santo Tomas Chichicastenango and Santa Catalina Nahualá, Guatemala. The research project investigates the effect dye bleeding has on the immaterial qualities of six huipiles from the collection of The Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (Amsterdam, Netherlands)—looking not only at the huipiles in their historical and sociopolitical context, but also by contacting the source communities and their respective experts. This research aims to be an academic collaboration with source communities that results in the contribution to the knowledge surrounding Maya peoples in Guatemala and their unique textile tradition.



Figure 1. Huipil—Image of Object RV-6093-47. Edited by Nicole Kruger to showcase dye bleeding. NMVW Collectie. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Accessed April 18, 2024. <https://collectie.wereldmuseum.nl/#/query/68b48860-1b4a-4815-b0db-4ff0cab19ce5>.

Introduction

Huipiles are garments worn by Maya women from Mexico and Central America (Merriam-Webster Online). Six Guatemalan huipiles from the collection of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen have been selected to research the effect of dye bleeding on the immaterial value of these objects. The research explores the dye bleeding problem, intentionality, how it is perceived and the impact this has on the immaterial qualities of these huipiles. Figure 1 shows a huipil from Chichicastenango, Guatemala; this huipil exhibits the dye bleeding that was the subject of this study. Despite the importance of the Guatemalan huipiles, there is still a lack of understanding of the dye bleeding phenomena they exhibit.

The main research question was: How do colour changes affect the immaterial value of Guatemalan huipiles, from both a European and Latin American perspective? This question has been investigated using the following methods of data gathering visual analysis, technical analysis (using a Video Spectral Comparator), literature research, surveys, and correspondence/interviews with museum professionals, experts and members of the source communities. Both analytical and ethnographic research approaches were used to holistically approach the question of dye bleeding. Community engagement was sought via a 16 questions survey written in both English and Spanish, as well as interviews and other forms of personal communication with Maya weavers and the communities surrounding them. This was done to gather data on the understanding, perception, use, and value of the dye bleeding found in huipiles from the region.

Research Methods

Multi-spectral Imaging

One huipil was examined using a Video Spectral Comparator (VSC® 8000/HS manufactured by Foster+Freeman®). VSC can supplement visual examination by providing additional information about material characteristics not easily seen with the naked eye (Serrano et al, 2021). The VSC is a device that allows for the multi-spectral imaging and full-spectrum colour examination of an object under varied light conditions; these light conditions range from near ultraviolet (NUV) illumination, through the visible spectra to near infrared (NIR) illumination (Forster+Freeman). Through the use of a VSC 8000, digital images of the selected huipil were acquired for analysis. Figure 2 shows how materials in the huipil fluoresce under ultraviolet light conditions; one can even see different dye material (A) on the ground fabric (something not easily observed under normal light conditions). Figure 3 and 4 show how the VSC was used to better visualise differences in dye material during the analysis. It was initially believed that the brocade (G) and the stitching (H) seen in Figure 3 were the same material due to their proximity and similar material characteristics. VSC revealed that, since the materials do not have the same fluorescent properties, these were different from one another (see I and J in Figure 4). Furthermore, the thread showing blue fluorescence (K) in Figure 4 illustrates how clear VSC can be when attempting to visualise the materials present in a textile object—the single white thread (of a different material than the rest of the huipil’s ground fabric) could have been overlooked if not carefully examined under magnification. VSC minimised the risk of similar details in the huipil being overlooked.

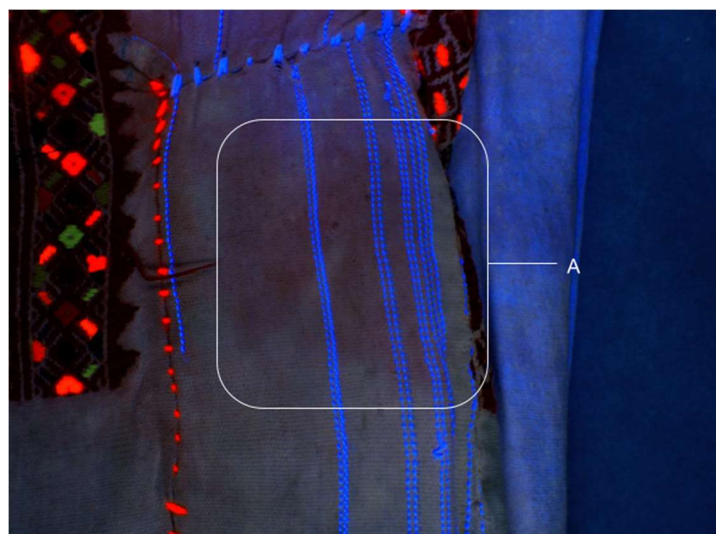


Figure 2. Video Spectral Comparator Detail of Object RV-6093-73. May 15, 2023. Taken by Art Proaño Gaibor, using Video Spectral Comparator (VSC® 8000/HS manufactured by Foster+Freeman®, Access to object courtesy of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

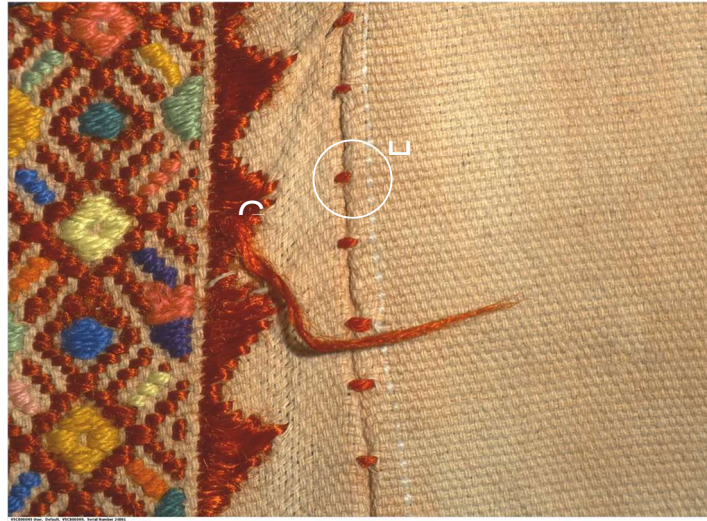


Figure 3. Video Spectral Comparator Detail of Object RV-6093-73. May 15, 2023. Taken by Art Proaño Gaibor, using Video Spectral Comparator (VSC® 8000/HS manufactured by Foster+Freeman®, Access to object courtesy of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

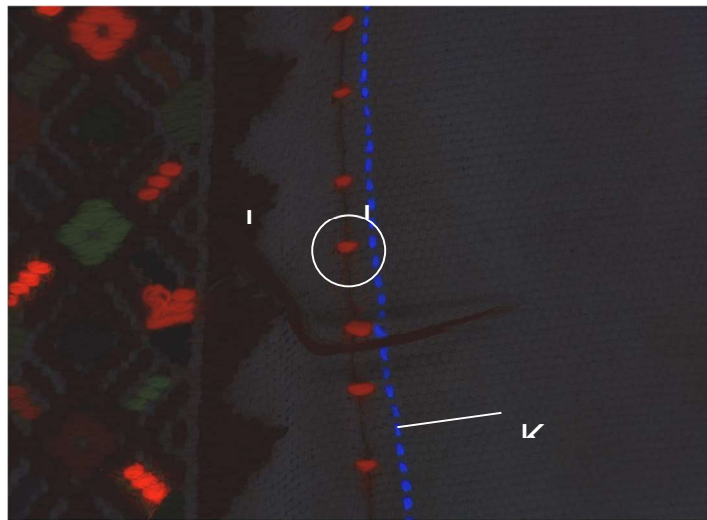


Figure 4. Video Spectral Comparator Detail of Object RV-6093-73. May 15, 2023. Taken by Art Proaño Gaibor, using Video Spectral Comparator (VSC® 8000/HS manufactured by Foster+Freeman®, Access to object courtesy of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

The results of the examination and analysis of the selected huipil under various light conditions suggest that the majority of the dye bleeding found in the huipil does not correspond to the dye material found in its brocaded areas. Instead, it is theorised that the dye bleeding originated from a source outside the object; for example, the huipil could have been stored with another garment containing non-colourfast material. Since the dye bleeding is not intrinsic to the huipil, it is believed to be unintentional. The result of the technical analysis shows that the dye problem is a more complex phenomenon than just observing dye bleeding on a huipil; the origin of the dye bleeding is relevant to drawing conclusions on intentionality. Unlike the rest of the huipiles studied, whose dye bleeding could be attributed to their own brocaded areas via visual inspection aided by photographic and dino-lite optical microscopy, the bleeding seen in Object RV-6093-73 did not come from the materials used to weave this garment. This is an example of how VSC can be used to aid diagnostic processes within the field of conservation.

Community Engagement

Via the use of a survey, interviews, and other forms of personal communication, data was gathered on the understanding, perception, use and value of dye bleeding in huipiles from Chichicastenango and Nahualá. To reach the Maya community in Guatemala, weaver collectives, human rights activists, tourism organisations, vendors, individual artists, museums, and community organisations were contacted. It was often the case that the weavers themselves had to be contacted through a secondary party.

While originally the interview guidelines provided by the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage Programme of the University of Amsterdam were preferred, these had to be adapted for information sharing to be more accessible for the source community (University of Amsterdam). It is important to note that Indigenous people in Guatemala have had a long history of marginalisation and therefore their socioeconomic power in the region has been minimised. The Indigenous communities in Guatemala have also been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic; “with poverty averaging at 79 percent among Guatemala’s Indigenous people – and 40 percent living in extreme poverty – communities have little or no access to technology and resources” (Beltrami, 2022). For Indigenous women in Guatemala, the United Nations states the following: “the situation of Indigenous women, who are often the main providers for their families, is even more worrisome” (Delgado, 2020). Since this research centres itself around the work created by indigenous Maya women in Guatemala, it was important to honour the information they could and did contribute to this research by tapping into any communication method available to them—for some, this meant being contacted by informal methods of communication such as Whatsapp. This was done in the spirit of ethical academic collaboration.

Figures 5 and 6 show some of the results of the survey. Figure 5 shows that (out of the 1874 huipiles included in the scope of the survey) the most common dye bleeding colour to be encountered was that of the red colour family group. Which is interesting, because if the dye bleeding was indeed random, one might see a more scattered distribution.

Colors that bleed more often based on the results of the survey

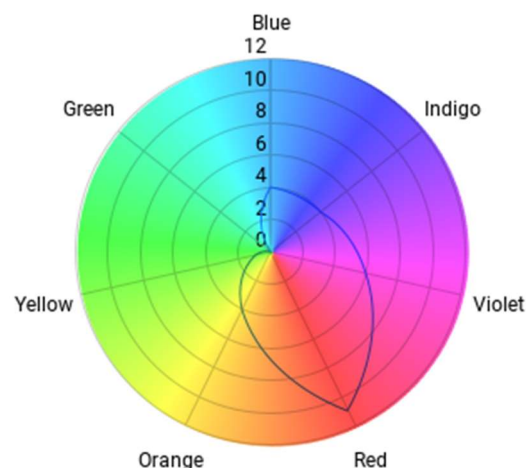


Figure 5. Charts resulting from the survey question: In migrating/bleeding dyes in huipiles, are there colours that bleed more often? Radial graph illustrating number of respondents and dye colours that bleed more according to survey.

Could these red and purple colours be part of an intentional dyeing technique employed in Chichicastenango and Nahualá? The results of this investigation suggest that this is the case. Out of the 6 weavers interviewed, 4 said that the dye bleeding was an intentional dye technique used by the communities of these two regions; 1 was unsure of its intentionality but said that the dye bleeding was characteristic of the regions in question and 1 was not familiar with the huipiles in question and

offered no comment on their intentionality. Tomasa Morales Mendez, a weaver from Chichicastenango (who was shown images on the dye bleeding seen in the objects selected for this study) explained that the dye bleeding seen is an intentional dyeing technique employed and valued by her community. Mendez stated during her interview that the technique has been used since “the time of the grandfathers and great-grandfathers”. She goes on to say that the bleeding denotes that the huipil is made from expensive materials—ones that were often made of silk. Furthermore, Mendez explains that the threads that do not bleed are made from *lustrina*, a different fibre material that is regarded as less valuable. Alongside Tomasa Morales Mendez, Barbara Knoke (Researcher) and Mari Gray (Vendor), Lidia Lopez (Weaver), Milly Lopez (Weaver) and Zoila Macedonia Hernandez Lopez (Weaver), all say the same thing: the bleeding dyes from Chichicastenango and Nahualá are intentional.

It is also important to investigate how the dye bleeding in huipiles from Nahualá and Chichicastenango is perceived by people not from these communities. Most of the participants in the survey were conservators, curators and collection managers from museums containing huipiles in their collection. Figure 6 shows that there are significant differences in the way the dye bleeding is perceived. And, of all the participants in the survey, 58.3% found the dye bleeding in the huipiles undesirable. In general, it was observed that there was a clear distinction in how the objects were perceived and valued by members of the source communities (or those aware of their cultural and material practices) and those from outside said communities, which were more likely to not be aware of the dyeing practices of the Quiche Maya communities in Chichicastenango and Nahualá. This finding has severe implications, given that at best it shows a lack of understanding of not only the intended material qualities of the object, but of the source community's values.

Do you consider dye migration/bleeding such as the one seen below as undesirable? ¿Considera la migración del tinte (como la que se ve a continuación) como un efecto indeseable?
 12 responses

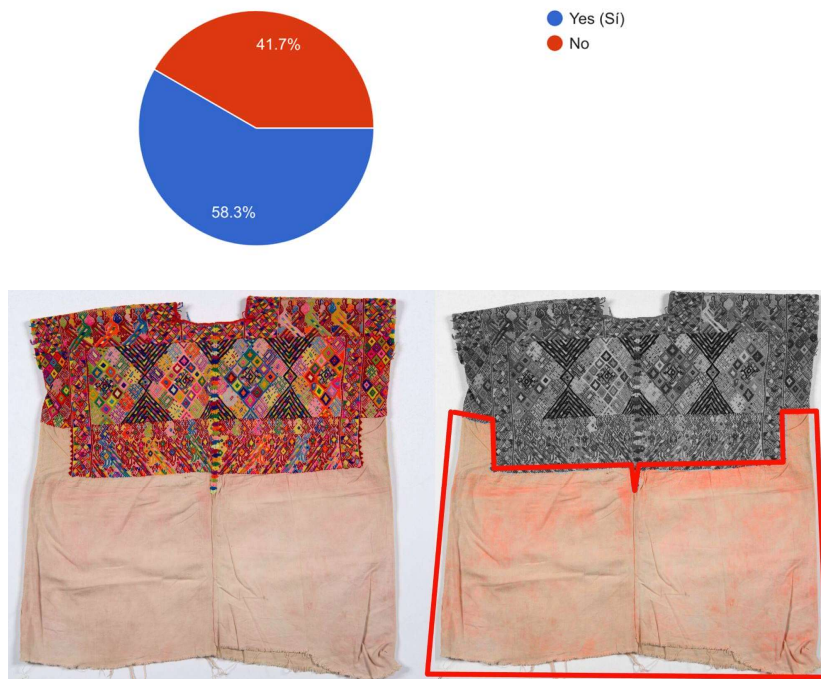


Figure 6. Chart resulting from and visual aid for the survey question: Do you consider dye migration/bleeding such as the one seen here as undesirable?

Collaborating with the Quiche Maya communities of Chichicastenango and Nahualá directly influenced the understanding, interpretation and consequent diagnosis of the dye bleeding seen in the studied huipiles. This shows that seeking out the insights of source community members can help institutions reduce knowledge blind-spots. Additionally, practising the recognition and questioning of one's own perception/biases when encountering cultural heritage objects can help with developing more complete understandings of said objects, be it from one's culture(s) or not. Overall, this research proposes that it is a good, responsible, and increasingly essential practice amongst safekeepers of cultural heritage objects to always question what is believed to be fact and to be open to new perspectives and alternatives.

Conclusion

The results of this research conclude that, first, multispectral imaging is a helpful tool for diagnostic research as it allowed for the enhanced visualisation of the dye bleed as well as a determination of the bleeding origin by comparing the fluorescence of the bleeding to that of the fluorescence of the different threads found in the examined huipil. Second, following interviews, personal communications and results of the survey it can be concluded that the red and purple dye bleeding found in the huipiles is an intentional dyeing technique and an integral part of the design of Quiche Maya huipiles from these two towns. Additionally, the research shows that this dyeing technique can be misinterpreted and commonly is regarded (by people from outside of the source communities) as undesirable. The perception of the dye bleeding as unintentional has a significant negative impact on how huipiles are valued, used, collected, and conserved by museums and other large cultural institutions. It has been found that a significant amount of people that work with and care for huipiles perceive the dye bleed as a problem and that is causing these objects to be devalued by major institutions, which could cause a systemic erasure of this coveted dye technique that is socially, symbolically, economically and aesthetically valued by the source community. The value of huipiles is being impacted by a lack of information and documentation of the dye techniques used by the Quiche Maya communities of Chichicastenango and Nahualá. Most importantly, this research proves that collaboration with source communities is not only a useful, but necessary tool for diagnostic processes within the field of conservation.

Collaboration with source communities, especially when there is a lack of written sources or easily accessible evidence, is imperative and has a direct effect on the diagnosis, treatment, value, and use of objects of cultural heritage. Such historic and complex textile traditions must be brought into focus, conserved and protected by increasing the awareness and understanding of huipiles as objects of Latin American, Mesoamerican, Maya and Guatemalan heritage. Additionally, insights on the differences in the values and perspectives explored can help shine light on potential blind-spots in the history and conservation of these objects. Increased inclusion of source communities in the decision-making process regarding the treatment of their cultural heritage objects is necessary for the sake of the conservation of our collective history.

Acknowledgements

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Designing and producing storage mounts for large-scale objects: case study of Baining masks from the Geneva Museum of Ethnography

By Lou Laurent

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This article is based on a Bachelors' thesis completed in 2023 at Geneva Museum of Ethnography as part of the HES-SO Bachelor of Arts in Conservation at the HE-ARC. This work is available on the SONAR platform : "Conception et réalisation de conditionnements d'objets grands formats : cas des masques Baining du Musée d'ethnographie de Genève, Lou Laurent".*



Figure 1. Baining mask (ETHOC009747) on its storage mount. ©LAURENT, He-Arc, MEG, 2023.

This research project focuses on designing and producing storage solutions that ensure the proper conservation of large-scale objects over time, while meeting their custodian institution's requirements in terms of commitments to sustainability and decolonisation issues.

Geneva's Museum of Ethnography (MEG) is a museum whose collection consists of objects from all five continents. It includes everyday objects, religious, craft, archaeological and contemporary art objects, as well as iconography, phonography, photography and books.

The MEG is undergoing a major transformation and is in the process of redefining its commitment to the social and environmental issues we face. To achieve this the museum has drawn up a strategic plan running from 2020 to 2024. The institution has set five objectives: "Decolonise the Museum /

Strengthen the Museum's role as a platform and partner for local and international collaborations / Diversify and welcome new audiences / Inspire creative processes / Become a reference for sustainable development".

The MEG houses a collection of fourteen Baining masks from New Britain (Papua New Guinea) that the museum acquired over the course of the 20th century. These masks were acquired by the MEG on three occasions, via various renowned art dealers. These masks never received the attention they needed and the necessary support their fragile structure required. If not addressed, the storage conditions of the collection may become a problem for long-term conservation.



Figure 2 and 3: Old museum pictures of two Baining masks from the MEG collections (ETHOC 046860 & ETHOC 046861) ©MEG

For these reasons, the museum asked to improve the conditions in which the masks are conserved, using appropriate storage mounts to improve storage and handling. The MEG's strategic plan was used as a guide for the reflection and decision-making in order to ensure the conservation of the objects studied. The two main objectives of the plan that were most relevant to this work are the decolonisation of the museum and sustainability.

It is important to note that, although Switzerland did not have a colony as such, it has been affected by colonialism, and so are museum collections. Decolonising the museum is a significantly sized process that requires a change in practices, ways of thinking and habits found within museums.

The United Nations 1987 *Brundtland Report*, quoted by the MEG on its website, defines sustainable development as "a pattern of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Sustainable development is commonly understood through three pillars: ecological, social, and economic. Researchers studying the issue of sustainability in museums have added a fourth pillar: cultural (Stylianou-Lambert et al, 2014). This fourth pillar, cultural sustainability, is interesting to consider in the field of conservation, because it also encompasses the preservation of intangible heritage. This is most relevant when we are talking about objects in ethnographic collections, where the spiritual dimension of the objects may be just as important if not more so than their material dimension.

Historical, social and economic context

The first area of research tackled the historical, social and economic context of Baining masks. It aimed to gather as much information as possible to enable us to know the objects better and to determine whether they had any particular spiritual needs.

The masks are used by the Baining population for dances called fire dance. These dances take place exclusively at night (Fuerst, 1991). A fire is lit in the village square, the women and children sit on one side and the musicians on the other (Martin, 2021). The musicians are exclusively men, equipped with bamboo instruments that they strike on the ground (Fuerst, 1991). The rhythmic music is accompanied by singing. The dancers created their masks in the forest far from the village before the ceremony. It is also where they prepare themselves and paint their bodies black and white. During the dance, they will wear only a penian case and their masks. The dancers must not be recognised by the public (Poole, 1943). When night falls, the masks come on stage. The dance normally ends before daybreak, when the masks return to the forest and the music dies down. The masks are then destroyed or left on the forest floor to decompose (Fuerst, 1991).

The women of the community are not allowed to see the masks except on the night of the dance, as they could become sterile or lose their babies. This injunction concerns only the women of the community: in fact, female researchers, and journalists, mainly from Europe and the United States, have been authorised to go and observe the making of the masks in the secret place set aside for this purpose in the forest (Poole, 1943).

According to the bibliographical sources consulted, the masks would no longer hold sacred dimension once the sun rises at the end of the dance. However, the sources are mainly Western and relatively dated (1940-2010).

The only recent issue that has been studied concerns the political, economic, and social implications of the fire dance. Since the second half of the last century, fire dancing has become a major tourist attraction in New Britain, and therefore a significant source of income for the local population. The fire dance was performed at a festival held in the Tolai territory, neighbouring the Baining. Various incidents involving tourists have led to discussions within the various Baining communities to find solutions to protect their practices and culture. According to Mathew, the Baining people have united to assert their rights to fire dancing and to the recognition of their culture, identity, and territory. To protect their culture, one of the latest decisions made by the Baining people was to relocate the

dances (night and day) to their territory. For the Baining people, the fire dance is "a symbol of ethnic identity". (Mathew, 2019).

A second line of research was intended to enable contact with the source community but unfortunately this was not possible for various reasons. However, such contact would have been highly relevant, particularly given the age of the sources consulted.

Physical condition and sustainability

The third area of work concerned the physical condition of the masks. The aim was to provide a storage solution to prevent further deterioration. Most of the masks were found to be structurally deformed, brittle and broken. The most damaged masks were given priority. In particular, the aim was to find a support that would prevent the masks from deforming further and from being subjected to excessive tension that could lead to further breakage.

The fourth area for consideration was sustainable development, particularly the cultural and social aspects of it. In addition to the impact of the packaging materials on the natural environment, it is important to consider their social and cultural impact. The exploitation of some natural resources has a particularly negative impact on Indigenous peoples, whose ancestral lands are polluted, degraded and even destroyed (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003). Some multinationals and other organisations do not hesitate to exert pressure and violate the rights of Indigenous populations. The hold of these European multinationals over populations and lands formerly colonised by European countries can be seen as a new form of Western oppression of Indigenous populations. Oil extraction and deforestation pose major ecological, social and economic problems (Center for International Environment Law, 2019). The destruction of ecosystems and the impact on local populations have been reported for several years by the populations themselves (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003), as well as by various teams of researchers and scientists (Center for International Environment Law, 2019). To be part of a sustainable development approach, this issue must be addressed in this work, as it impacts on all four pillars: environmental, social, economic and cultural.

The use of materials derived from petrochemicals, mining, deforestation and mass farming should therefore be banned or avoided as far as possible. Alternatives do exist, but not all are equal in the field of objects conservation.

The MEG is committed to using local materials as a priority, with guaranteed traceability and from eco-labelled companies (MEG, 2022a, p. 3). The conservation laboratory has also implemented a project along these lines, setting up collection points for offcuts of conservation cardboard, foam and fabric. These cardboard scraps come from companies whose materials are FSC® certified by the international non-governmental organisation Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). This organisation promotes "responsible forest management", which is an environmental, social and economic responsibility. FSC® has three labels: FSC® 100% (material from FSC® certified forests), FSC® Recycled (100% recycled material) and FSC® Mix (a mixture of the other two labels). This certification should ensure that products come from sustainably managed forests. It should be pointed out, however, that

the label is criticised and accused of not meeting all its commitments (Yale Environment 360, 2018, [online]). The corrugated cardboard used by the MEG comes in various thicknesses and is certified as suitable for conservation. It is bought from two European companies that abide by a production sustainability charter. The cellulose used to manufacture the cartons is FSC® certified.

In view of the above observations, the use of existing and salvaged materials was favoured over the search for and use of "new" conservation materials. The main idea was to use as few materials as possible that are the result of overexploitation of natural resources, particularly petrochemical materials such as plastic foams. Given these facts, the choice was simple: to use corrugated conservation board as the raw material for storage mounts, sourced as much as possible from offcuts collected by MEG. The aim was to select offcuts according to need and to cut them as little as possible.

Another factor influencing the choice of these materials was the volume of the objects. This would have required huge blocks of polyethylene foam, whereas fluted cardboard has the advantage of being able to be assembled into hollow shapes. And finally, to replace the flexibility of foam, we chose to combine cardboard with fabric.

Storage solutions

The final area of work focused on designing and producing the storage mounts. The initial general concept was to design a system that can be adapted differently for all the masks in the collection. Baining masks are large-scale objects made of plant materials that are sensitive to relative humidity variations, although they are generally kept in the stable environment of the museum's storage. Therefore, masks need both sufficient support and flexibility. A structure that is too rigid would put tension on their constitutive materials.

Depending on its thickness and the direction of its grooves, cardboard can be used to provide both support and flexibility. However, cardboard is too abrasive for masks with fragile surfaces. The addition of fabric cushions provided the extra suppleness required. The cushions are filled with pieces of fabric torn into small pieces. The fabric comes from scraps of recycled white 100% cotton sheets. As a result, fabrics that were no longer in use have been upcycled to a new function.

The designed mount system is made of two different types of modules, a flexible form placed on top of a solid form. These modules are then assembled to a thick cardboard base, which can be reinforced with strips of cardboard for heavy objects. The first module (fig. 4) provides greater flexibility of support: it uses strips of cardboard, the flutes of which are parallel to the direction of the desired fold. The cardboard is then inserted into a fabric cushion, leaving a margin of cardboard at the ends to allow it to be fixed, either directly to the base of the packaging or to the second module.

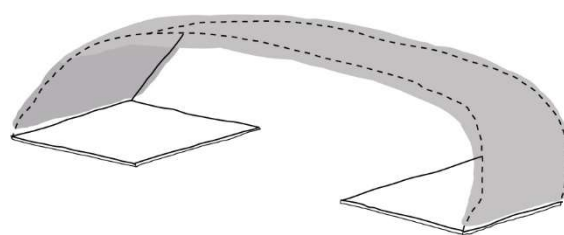


Figure 4: Module one with cushion (grey element) ©LAURENT, He-Arc, MEG, 2023.

In order to support heavier areas, a second module (fig. 5 & 6) is made up of two parallel sheets of cardboard with vertical flutes, a direction in which the cardboard is less likely to bend. The panels are joined together at the required distance, using thinner cardboard. The top of the panels is cut at the required angle, on which the first module with cushion is placed to adequately maintain in place elements of the masks that need support. The combination of the different modules keeps the masks in place and secure. Only one of the four masks mounted with this system needed a strap of cotton to secure it in place.

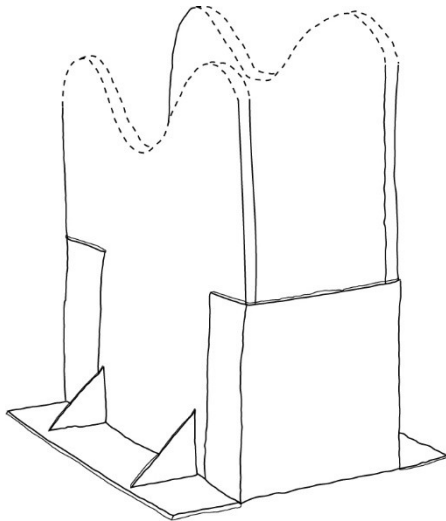


Figure 5: Module two without module one.
©LAURENT, He-Arc, MEG, 2023.

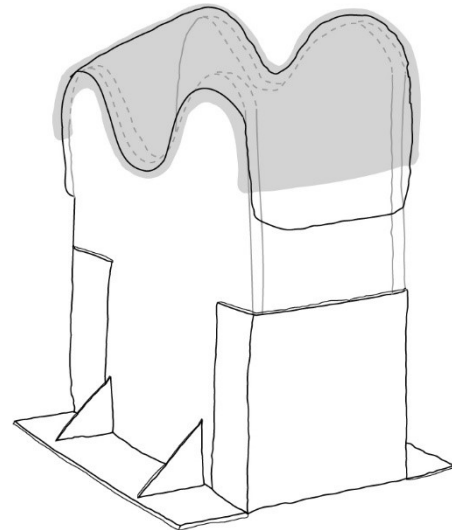


Figure 6: Module two with module one
©LAURENT, He-Arc, MEG, 2023.

Thanks to this solution, the masks are installed on storage mount adapted to their individual needs (fig. 7 & 8)). This allow them to be moved more easily and safely for future consultation by representatives of the source community, museum staff or researchers.



Figure 7. Baining mask (ETHOC 048039) on its storage mount (front view). ©LAURENT, He-Arc, MEG, 2023.



Figure. 8. Baining mask (ETHOC048039) on its storage mount (back view) ©LAURENT, He-Arc, MEG, 2023.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the various research studies and reflections concerning the museum's commitment to sustainable development and decolonisation issues have enabled us to make coherent choices that do not conflict with the proper conservation of the objects. Throughout the mounting process, material resources were used in a conscious and calculated way. Since the start of the project, waste has been sorted and weighed, making it possible to assess the total waste generated by a project of this type. Even though a reflexion was made to reduce material use, around 1kg of waste was produced during this work, including unusable scraps and latex gloves.

These storage mounts meet the museum's needs in terms of object conservation, space optimization and reduction of material use. Without having been able to communicate with representatives of the source community, it is not possible to state that this solution is 100% adequate. Although awareness of the decolonization process in the museum's collections accompanied this project, the results obtained are more relevant to the criterion of sustainability than to the criterion of decolonisation. However, now that the masks are on individual supports, consultation would be easier if contacts with the source community were established by the museum in the future.

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Profiles



Elisa Palomino PhD

Working at the intersection of anthropology, education and sustainable fashion, I have conducted research, written publications and developed educational programs on Indigenous knowledge, participatory design, ethics, and heritage. I have explored themes of subsistence materials from Arctic cultures with the aim of protecting Indigenous Peoples' rights as tradition holders, alongside the rights of animals and the natural environment. I lead global collaborations with Natives, scholars and institutions, linking education to sustainable development across ecological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions.

I have led EU funded projects such as Horizon 2020 FishSkin, I have been a Fulbright scholar, a Kluge fellow at the Library of Congress, a fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science and a joint KHI-ANAMED fellow. Currently, I am a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, specialising in Indigenous cultural heritage, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Visual Anthropology, and Museum Studies.

I hold 25-year experience designing for luxury fashion brands including John Galliano and Christian Dior. As Fashion Print director at Central Saint Martins, London, and international lecturer for over a decade, I focus on sustainability and nature-based materials. I earned a Ph.D. in Sustainable Fashion and Anthropology from London College of Fashion.



Mamta Pandey

I am Mamta Pandey, and I'm brimming with enthusiasm for contributing to this group's success! My hard work, meticulous attention to detail, and strong organizational skills are the weapons I bring to the table. I'm driven to learn, grow, and excel in this profession, and I see serving as your Assistant Coordinator as a tremendous honour. I'm confident I can strengthen our activities and build a vibrant professional community here.

My experience as a Project Associate at IGNC (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts) has equipped me with diverse skills:

Leadership: I've spearheaded various projects involving preventive and remedial conservation of rare books, manuscripts, paper, and library materials.

Expertise: As a trained Museum storage re-organization expert, I led the successful re-organization of the National Handloom and Crafts Museum in 2023, managing 33,000 objects.

Adaptability: Currently, I'm applying my skills at the Prime Minister's Home, handling the remedial conservation of archival collections, newspaper, photographs, and albums.

My willingness to learn and embrace the diverse challenges each project presents will be invaluable in assisting and bridging the gap between group members. I'm eager to embark on this new professional journey with ICOM-CC and build a collaborative team that thrives on accomplishing every task we're entrusted with.

Conferences

5th International Conference on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for Cultural Heritage

18 to 20 September 2024 in Berlin, Germany

The event invites scientists, conservators, curators, archivists, librarians, collection managers and others, to discuss together methods for dealing with the challenges posed by the risk of pests to cultural heritage and aims to promote international knowledge transfer and further education on IPM in museums, archives and historic buildings. Early bird option until 15 June.

Museum Storage: Current Situation and New Challenges

29, 30, 31 October 2024 in Paris, France

The ICOM Working Group on Collections in Storage is organizing an international conference in Paris on the subject of museum storage worldwide. Proposals for papers and/or articles in English or French will be accepted up to and including 15 May 2024.

Sustainable Solutions for Conservation: new strategies for new times

23 to 27 September 2024 in Lima, Perú

The 30th biennial IIC Congress 2024 will be hosted in Lima and will take a hybrid format, promoting a more sustainable and climate-friendly event. With the challenges associated with conserving Peru's rich cultural heritage as a starting point, the conference will look outwards to similar challenges facing many other countries around the world. It will also look into safe and more affordable approaches to increase protection and provide greater resilience to future world events and crises.

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