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Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien  
University of Applied Arts Vienna

## **collection care – case studies**

**MA Britta Schwenck**

**TEXTILE CONSERVATION WORKSHOP**

Bogd Khaan Palace Museum, Ulaanbaatar

February 24 – 28, 2014

University of Applied Arts – Institute of Conservation / Universität für angewandte Kunst – Institut für Konservierung und Restaurierung  
Head of the Institute / Institutsleitung o.Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Gabriela Krist  
Salzgries 14, 3.–5. Stock, 1010 Wien, Austria. T +43 1 711 33-4810. F +43 1 532 14 47-4819. kons-rest@uni-ak.ac.at. www.dieangewandte.at/restaurierung

## **collection care**

→ project weeks

→ projects of students, e.g. diploma thesis

## **topics**

- Surveying/ inventory
- cleaning
- packing for short-time or long-time storage

At the Institute of Conservation collection care is an important topic.

The first week in every semester/term, is reserved for working one week with the students in a collection of a museum or monastery etc..

During this week we mostly make a survey or an inventory, concentrating on the collection and the condition of the objects. Sometimes practical work, like cleaning or packing for storage is also included.

Collection care can also be part of some student's projects or (most of the time) a diploma thesis.

I would now like to give some examples what we, the textile conservation class, have done during the last years.

## **collection care – case studies**

- costume collections
- liturgical garments (vestments)
- tapestries
- inauguration flags

The textile conservation class worked on some costume collections, liturgical garments (catholic church), on a tapestry collection and some flags belonging to the university.

## Landesmuseum Burgenland, Austria

- Insect infestation: cloth moths (*tineola bisselliella*), carpet beetle (*anthrenus verbasci*)
- new costume storage system

### **preventive conservation work at the Institute of Conservation**

- cleaning
- collection survey – inventory (materials, condition etc.)
- photographs
- packing in new acid-free cardboard boxes

One huge project is the work on a costume collection from a Museum in Burgenland, which is part of Austria. The museum has a costume collection with about 1000 objects, mostly traditional Austrian costumes and made of all kind of materials, even synthetics, most objects are from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the textile storage there has been an insect infestation and because of that the need to control all objects and the establishment of a new storage system.

After a treatment with nitrogen, all cloth moths and beetles were killed, but the remains of the insects were still on the textile surfaces. Therefore the museum brought all the textiles (step by step, of course) to the Institute for cleaning and packing in new cardboard boxes.

What we now do is the cleaning of every textile, taking photographs (in our photo studio), collect all data (inventory number, material, condition etc.), make a digital list (an inventory) and pack the objects into the new, acid-free cardboard boxes for long-time storage. On the lid of the boxes, we glue all pictures and numbers of the objects (that are inside). When the boxes come back to the museum our work helps the museum

staff to find their objects easily and it also helps them to decide about further conservation treatment.

## Landesmuseum Burgenland, Austria



Cleaning of the textile objects with vacuum cleaner, soft brushes and forceps (for removing the larva).

On the right you can see a picture of the moth larva (cocoon) found on the object (violet and yellow wool).

## Landesmuseum Burgenland, Austria



On the left side: a student preparing a mannequin with one of the objects for taking pictures in the photo studio.

On the right side: one of our students while packing. Tissue sausages and snowballs are inserted, wherever needed – folds, sleeves, seams, shoulders etc.

## Landesmuseum Burgenland, Austria



A women's jacket before and after padding with acid free tissue paper sausages and snowballs.



## Landesmuseum Burgenland, Austria



And finally the ready packed cardboard-boxes. We send them back this way and get new objects to work on.

## Elisabethinen Klagenfurt, Austria

„project week“: one week (40 hours work for each student)

Around 270 pieces of liturgical garments

### **preventive conservation:**

- Collection survey
- inventory
- packing for storage

At the monastery of the Elisabethinen in Klagenfurt, Austria we worked on liturgical garments (garments from catholic church).

The monastrey has around 270 textiles, that were stored in old wooden cupboards. In 2012 they were planning a new storage for paintings and also for textiles. The monastery contacted the Institute of conservation and asked for help. They needed an analysis of their textiles objects, especially about the number and the condition of their objects.

Therefore we went for one week to Klagenfurt to make an inventory. Important information, like the measures, the type of object (big garment or smaller blanket etc.) helped to find the new storage system (shelves, drawers, cupboards) and the needed space for the new storage.

## Elisabethinen Klagenfurt, Austria



The old storage system (wooden cupboards) is shown in the picture on the left. Too many garments are lying in one drawer.

We took the garments (right) and brought them to our working area and then made the documentation (description of the objects, material, condition etc.) of each object.

## Elisabethinen Klagenfurt, Austria



During the work on the garments (measuring and work on the laptop).  
On the right side you can see the our photographer while taking pictures of every object.

## Elisabethinen Klagenfurt, Austria



Storage after finishing our work.

## Neukloster Abbey, Austria

project week\*: one week (40 hours work for each student)

Around 500 pieces of liturgical garments

### **preventive conservation:**

- Collection survey
- inventory
- packing for short-time storage
  
- Planning of a new textile storage
- Second part of the project: arrange the new textile storage

At the monastery of the Neukloster in Wiener Neustadt, Austria we again worked on liturgical garments (garments from catholic church).

This monastery has around 500 textiles, that were stored in different wooden cupboards. In 2013 they began planning a new storage for the textiles and were also planning new storages for other objects like paintings and stones. The monastery asked the Institute of conservation for help with a survey and planning of the new storages.

For the textiles they mostly needed a condition survey because some of the garments are still worn by the priests (for celebrating).

During a pre-diploma thesis one of our students made a survey of the textiles (materials, condition, special objects (“Highlights”) etc.) and she also made a plan for the new storage.

## Neukloster Abbey, Austria



Students at work – filling in the documents we had prepared before. The documents include things like measures, inventory number, material, type of object, location of the object etc.

On the right: handling of the large objects – always two students, sometimes more.



## Neukloster Abbey, Austria



Packing the objects into cardboard boxes for the storage.

Here some boxes were used that are not made of acid-free materials, but the objects have not been packed for long time. We used acid-free tissue paper for covering the objects and for padding the folds.



## Neukloster Abbey, Austria



Before (left) and after (right) packing the objects. The wooden cupboards are part of the old storage system that should be kept in future.

There will be another room where the furniture will change completely. The new cupboards should be made of metal, should have drawers in different sizes (probably two or three different sizes) for every object.

The planning is not finished now!

## Neukloster Abbey, Austria



After packing the objects. We tried to reduce the number of objects in one drawer and tried to arrange everything new. These objects will remain in that storage because the priests still use/wear them. Some other objects, that are not in use anymore or in a bad condition will come to the new storage.

## Stift Zwettl, Austria

Mitre



Mitre, Stift Zwettl, Lower Austria. around 1200 AD Material: silk, linen, glass, metal, pearls (from Austrian river)

The conservation work was carried out by some students of textile conservation class. It included a cleaning of all materials, even metal, and then some stitching work for consolidation of the fragile silk fabrics.

For the storage of the object, a box with a special mount had to be done. The mount is made of conservation materials, means, cardboard, Polyethylene foam and some prewashed fabrics. It is custom-made for this mitre, which is a prominent and very special object of the monastery.

## Stift Zwettl, Austria



Board and mount on the left side and the acid-free box for storage on the right side.

All materials used are acid free and suitable for long-time storage.

## Stift Zwettl, Austria



Anther object from Zwettl in Lower Austria.

Embroidery of a chasuble, around: Material: linen, silk, metal threads (gilded membrane, gold and gilded silver)

After finishing some sewing conservation work (securing the threads, and some parts of the linen fabric), a mount for storage had to be made.

The student made a board (cardboard), covered it with a layer of a soft cotton fabric and then with another, finer cotton fabric. On the left and right side you can see some loops for an easy handling of the object without touching it.

## Stift Zwettl, Austria



On the left picture you can see the negative form in the board (for the embroidery). The textile is lying inside this mount and cannot move, when it is handled.

On the right side a picture of the textile, on the board and inside the box. With the loops you can easily move.

Again all materials are acid-free and suitable for long-time storage.

## Dommuseum Salzburg, Austria

“project week“: one week (40 hours work each student)

set of six tapestries belonging to the Dome of Salzburg.

**preventive conservation:**

- de-installation of the tapestries inside the Dome
- dry cleaning
- rolling for storage

Set of six tapestries, Dom of Salzburg, dated in the middle of 17th century AD, woven in Brussels.

Material: wool, silk, linen (backing). Measures: around 4,50 metres (height) and 4 to 6 metres (width)

The tapestry were hanging in the dome when we arrived in Salzburg.

First Step was de-Installation of the tapestries, followed by cleaning and finally rolling of the tapestries for storage.

## Dommuseum Salzburg, Austria



The pictures show the de-installation of the tapestries. They were hanging on metal bars inside the church. Two men slowly let them down and we all stood underneath to take them.

After folding/rolling them they could be brought to the working area, also inside the church (these tapestries were too large to bring them to another room for working).



## Dommuseum Salzburg, Austria



Cleaning of the tapestries.

The dry cleaning was carried out with vacuum cleaners with fine brushes (used for computer cleaning). It took 4 to 5 hours to clean one tapestry from front and back, 5 persons.

## Dommuseum Salzburg, Austria



Rolling of a tapestry, 5 persons needed.

The roller tube was covered with a layer of Tyvek (Polyethylene fleece). The tapestry was laying with the front side on the floor. On top we put a piece of Tyvek.

Rolling started after arranging the tapestry. On the last part (1 m) of the tapestry we put a pre-washed cotton fabric, that covers the tapestry from outside. This fabric is then fixed with cotton ribbons (not too strong!).

## Dommuseum Salzburg, Austria



The tube is then put to racks on each end of the tube. The racks/stands on both end helps to move/handle and store the tapestry. With the racks the tapestry is not lying on the floor and ther is no pressure to one part of the tapestry (where it is lying on).

## Papyrus Museum, Vienna, Austria

- “project week”: one week (40 hours work each student)
- pre-diploma and diploma thesis

### **preventive conservation:**

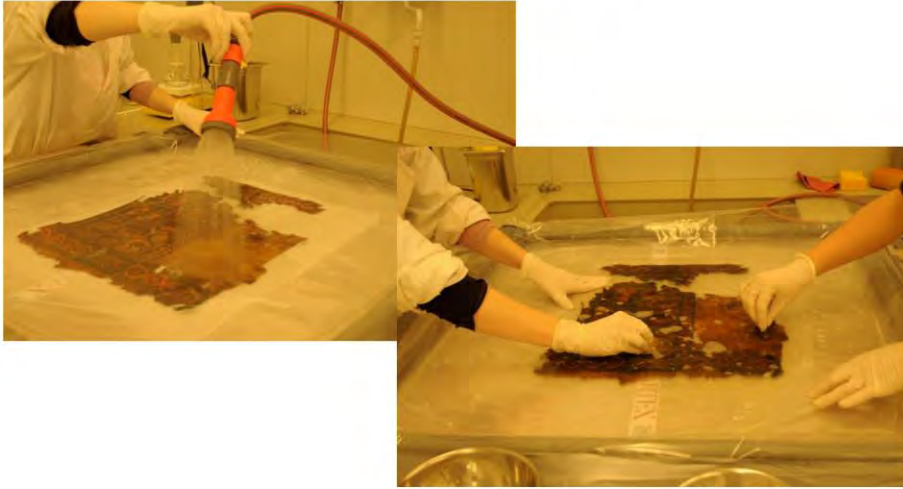
- collection survey/ inventory
- conservation of some objects
  
- exhibition

The Papyrus Museum in Vienna has a collection of so called coptic textiles (late antique, early islamic). These excavated textiles (grave findings) were found in Egypt, dated from the 4th to 9th century. They are made of wool and linen, sometimes silk. Most of the objects are fragments, due to the fact that they were found in graves.

The institute made an collection survey during a project week and then filled in the data in a database. After knowing the condition and types of objects, some were chosen to be topic of a diploma thesis (conservation of coptic textiles and removing of different types of tape).

The conservation treatment included a dry cleaning with vacuum cleaner and brushes, in some cases a wet cleaning (I will show some pictures of it) and a conservation treatment (sewing). After the conservation and removing of the tapes, some of the objects were shown in an exhibition about the Coptic culture in the Papyruseum.

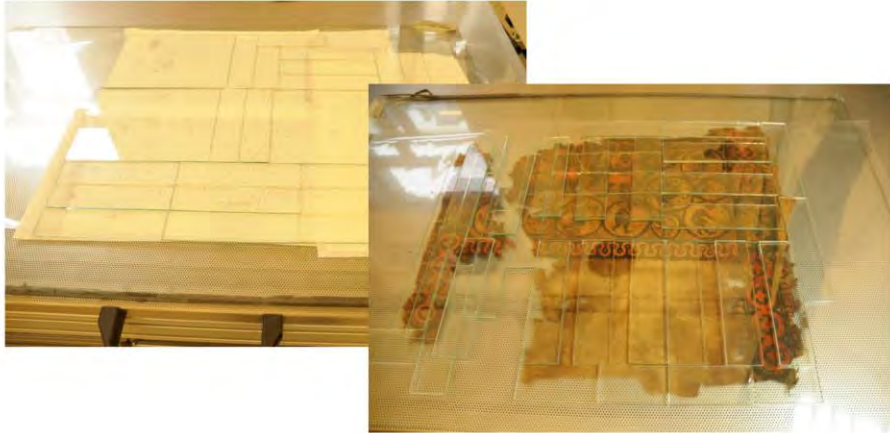
## Papyrus Museum, Vienna, Austria



When needed and possible, a wet cleaning was carried out. After testing which detergent gave best result, the wet cleaning was done in two different ways: in a bath (you will see now) or on a suction table (I will show an example for that type of cleaning later).

Cleaning of textiles in a bath: first wetting the object carefully with deionized water, then treatment with non-ionic detergent (sponges and soft mechanical treatment).

## Papyrus Museum, Vienna, Austria



After cleaning and rinsing, the fragment was arranged and threads were put in right order.

On the left side you can see the fragment covered with blotting paper and glass (for some pressure).

On the right side the same fragment after removing the paper. After that, a hairdryer (cold air!) was used to dry the textile quick to avoid bleeding of colours, or water stains.

## Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria

Students project

### **Preventive conservation**

- Condition survey
- Test for wet cleaning
- Wet cleaning

Inauguration Flags, Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.  
Material: wool and cotton, felt, padding inside, 1987.

They were used during the inauguration of a vice chancellor in 1987. Since then they belong to the Collection of the university and since 2003 they are hanging in the lecture room of our institute. After 10 years of presentation, they got very dirty, especially in the upper parts. That's why we decided to clean them. Dry cleaning was not successful. So a test for the wet cleaning was done. For the treatment a anionic and a non-ionic detergent were tested, the non-ionic gave a better result is less harmless for both materials (Wool and cotton). Because of the large dimension of the flags (around 3,40 cm height and 1,50 width) it was impossible to clean them at the institute. The wet cleaning was done at the aerosol cleaning at Schönbrunn castle.

## Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria

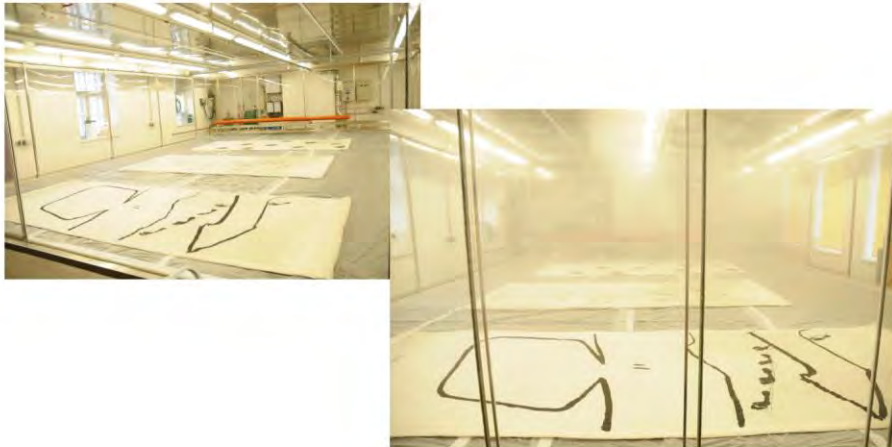


The lecture room at the Institute of Conservation, 2012.

The hanging flags are dirty, especially in the upper parts some grey areas occur.



## Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria



Wet cleaning at the aerosol cleaning in Schönbrunn castle.

Aerosol mist comes from the top and wettens the textile very carefully. It takes around 3 hours until the object is completely wet.

## Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria



After getting completely wet, we started with detergent cleaning. Therefore some non-ionic detergent was foamed and then sprayed on the surface of the object. For a better cleaning result the students took sponges and did some careful mechanical treatment.

For large objects (like carpets and tapestries) there is a bridge made of metal from where you can work without stepping on the object.

## Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria



[www.aerosolreinigung.eu](http://www.aerosolreinigung.eu)

Wet cleaning at the aerosol cleaning in Schönbrunn castle.

After the detergent cleaning and rinsing, drying of the object started. The students used large cotton towels, put them on the surface and on top they put a plastic foil (PE) to increase the negative pressure (suction). The towels were immediately pressed/sucked onto the objects surface and got wet. After a short while the towels were removed and if needed the drying was carried out again.

The pH of the washing solution was monitored during the whole cleaning process. Samples were taking at different steps of the cleaning.

## Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria



The inauguration flags after cleaning in the lecture room.

**Thank you for listening!**

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Salzgries 14, 3.–5. Stock, 1010 Wien, Austria. T +43 1 711 33-4810. F +43 1 532 14 47-4819. kons-rest@uni-ak.ac.at. www.dieangewandte.at/restaurierung