

REPORT

Workshop: New Delhi, 17.-21. August 2009

“How to care for textile collections: Methods and practical approaches”

National Museum Institute, New Delhi & University of Applied Arts, Vienna

Framework: An Indo-Austrian collaboration in the field of conservation

The workshop „How to care for textile collections: Methods and practical approaches“, generously financed by Eurasia-Pacific Uninet, supported by the Austrian Cultural Forum New Delhi, was set up in close collaboration between the National Museum Institute in New Delhi (Prof. Dr. Kamal Jain) and the Conservation Department of the University of Applied Arts Vienna (Prof. Dr. Gabriela Krist). The National Museum and the National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum in New Delhi offered their lecture halls, storage areas and exhibition galleries as workshop-venues.

The workshop took place from August 17th to 21st 2009 and was attended by 28 participants from different institutions and museums from all over India, mostly curators, conservators and scientists, who deal with textile collections in their daily professional life, but including also 4 students from the National Museum Institute and 2 students from the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Lectures and practical exercises were done by 4 lecturers from India and 4 lecturers from Austria.

Background: India as a living „Textile Nation“

India has a rich tradition of manufacturing textiles since very early times. And India is the only country today who holds a „Ministry of Textiles“ in its government. Textiles play an important role in everyday life in India: on one hand as an essential economic factor in textile industries, on the other hand in keeping outstanding textile collections in museums all over India, which still serve as unique inspiration resources for crafts people, designers, artists or the textile industry.

The challenge: How to care for textile collections

Textiles, being organic materials, are very fragile in nature and deteriorate quickly under unfavourable environmental conditions. Unfortunately, a lot of damage also comes from negligence in handling, storage and display of textiles in museums. With proper care the life of precious textile collections can be enhanced significantly. The goal of the workshop therefore was a practical orientated training to the participants of the workshop in preservation, handling and preventive conservation of textile collections.

The workshop-content: Prevention is better than cure

Instead of teaching conservation treatments, which need to be carried out exclusively by professional long-term trained textile conservators, this short-term workshop focussed on preventive strategies and measures, which can be easily implemented and realized by any museum staff member in any collection.

The main topics covered in the workshop were:

- The museum building and its impact on storage conditions
- Textile fibres, their identification and their ways of degradation
- Condition reporting in textile collections
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for textile collections
- Supporting, labelling and mounting of textiles

The teaching methodology: Emphasis on practical exercises

The workshop comprised of lectures and demonstrations, as well as excursions including surveys and case studies. Relevant case studies were also discussed on participant's input, related questions and experiences. All the participants were provided with handouts, specialized literature, bibliography and web-based links during the course of workshop.

The highest emphasis was given to practical exercises, which were carried out in the storage of the National Museum and in the textile gallery of the National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum as a group activity under the direct supervision of Austrian and Indian conservation experts. The practical exercise and hands-on-methodology opened a wide variety of practical skills, tools and methods. The storage and exhibition areas of the two museums offered a great learning field for the participants, which enabled questions, discussions and exercises under very "real conditions" in an Indian museum surrounding.

Participant's feedback: „A great experience...“

The content of the workshop were considered by all participants most relevant for their professional field of work. Everybody agreed on: Prevention is better than cure.

The overall surveys (from the building outside to the inside storage) helped to understand the broader context in collection care. By doing the surveys „our eyes were opened for things we tend to ignore“ (quotation of one participant). The necessity of studying textile technologies and deterioration causes first to apply this knowledge on the care of textile collections was clearly pointed out. The need for practical hands-on training in implementing preventive measures was really well shown. Quotation of one participant: „Treat it as a child, when you handle a textile.“

Concerning the course methodology the correlation between theoretical lectures and practical exercises was well arranged and appreciated by the participants. The practical sessions of the workshop in the NMI and the NHHM turned out to be the best and most valuable part in learning for the participants. The practical exercises were considered as too short in time. The handouts and copies were considered as extremely useful and will be distributed by most participants in their own museums to other staff members.

Overthese the participants pointed out the social benefit from the workshop: Participants from different museums from all over India got to know each other during working together in a team – a good starting point for creating a national network for professionals who deal with similar questions in their daily work and are willing to exchange ideas and experiences. Students considered the opportunity to meet professionals in the workshop as an important point for their future professional carrier.

OUTVIEW

Most of the participants expressed their wish to continue with specialized weekly workshops like these. Future activities should cover topics like: Transport, packing, storage management and storage reorganization, but also more specialized workshop on treatments like cleaning and supporting for display and storage.

List of participants

Name	Museum/Organisation	State	City
Dr Bijan Kumar Mondal	Gurusaday Museum	West Bengal	Kolkata
Dr C . Maheswarn	Government Museum Chennai	Tamilnadu	Chennai
Smt. B.P. Sreedevi	Salarjung Museum	Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad
Kamlini Kundu (Biswas)	Indian Museum	West Bengal	Kolkata
Mr Abhieet Bhawal	Victoria Memorial Hall	West Bengal	Kolkata
Mr D.K. Ghavri	Govet Museum, and art gallery	Punjab	Chandigarh
Shri R.C. Jain	National Museum	Delhi	New Delhi
Sri S. K Singh	IGRMS	Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal
Mr.Ansar Ali	National Gandhi Museum	Delhi	New Delhi
Sri Deepak Chaudhary.	IGRMS	Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal
Mr.Pankaj Sharma	Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II ,	Rajasthan	Jaipur
Mrs. Mankomal Kaur Thapar	NIFT Hyderabad)	Andhra Pradesh	Secunderabad
Dr Subhashini Aryan	Museum of folk and tribal art	Haryana	Gurgaon
Mr Subhendu Banarjee	Victoria Memorial hall	West Bengal	Kolkata
Ms. Poonam Khanna	Govt. Museum and Art Gallery	Punjab	Chandigarh
Dr Sharfauddin	Chandradhari Museum	Bihar	Darbhanga
Ms.Smita Singh	INTACH	Delhi	New Delhi
Shri Humane K.A.	Salarjung Museum	Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad
Mr. Sushobhan Adhikary	Kala Bhawan Museum	West Bengal	Kolkata
Shri Mohan Ram	National Museum	Delhi	New Delhi
Sri P Shanker Rao	IGRMS	Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal
Shri Mahesh Kumar	National Museum	Delhi	New Delhi
Ms. Kmalesh Pangtey	Pearl Academy of Fashion	Delhi	New Delhi
Ms Darshan Shah	Weavers Studio	West Bengal	Kolkata
Dr Kedar Nath Singh	Director	Bihar	Patna
Ms. Renu Jathar	Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj	Maharashtra	Mumbai
Mr. Baishakhi Mallick	Victoria Memorial hall	West Bengal	Kolkata

List of lecturers

Prof. Dr. Gabriela Krist, University of Applied Arts Vienna

Prof. Dr. Kamal K. Jain, National Museum Institute New Delhi

Prof. Dr. Charu Smita Gupta, National Handlooms and Handicrafts Museum New Delhi

Dr. Anamika Pathak, National Museum New Delhi

Dr. Martina Griesser-Stermscheg, University of Applied Arts Vienna

Dipl.-Rest. Regina Knaller, University of Applied Arts Vienna

Namrata Dalela, National Museum Institute New Delhi

Marianne Novotny-Kargl, University of Applied Arts Vienna