

Textile Arts Council

The Bay Area forum for artists, aficionados & collectors of weaving, rugs & tapestries, baskets, costume & wearable art

Sept. 2023
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Sneak Peek:

Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style

By **Laura L. Camerlengo**, Curator in Charge of Costume and Textile Arts

Opening on January 20, 2024, at the de Young museum, *Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style* examines the role of style as a marker of social identity. Drawn from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's exceptional holdings of 20th- and 21st-century high fashion and haute couture, *Fashioning San Francisco* will present the work of more than 50 fashion designers, from Balmain to Miyake, Valentino to McQueen, with the majority of ensembles to be displayed for the very first time. Indeed, the Museums are home to one of the most significant collections of 20th- and 21st-century women's costume in the United States, including exemplary gifts from Bay Area women philanthropists. *Fashioning San Francisco* is the first exhibition to share a richness of works from the costume collection in more than 35 years and will explore how women's fashions have shaped, and been shaped by, the city of San Francisco.

The exhibition begins in the early 20th century, a time when San Francisco was regaining its position and redefining itself in the wake of the city's earthquake and fire in 1906. The city's desire to assert its international status in the wake of disaster manifests in the dress codes of its prominent women. Such manifestations include imported French fashions brought into the city through its port, as well as presentations of French couture gowns at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, French peoples formed one of the largest immigrant communities in San Francisco, and upon their arrival, they began importing French goods. The exhibition will feature a number of early European designs that attest to San Francisco's burgeoning affluence and cosmopolitanism (Figure 1).

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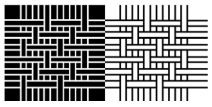


Figure 1. Blancquaert (English, active 1903-1941)

Evening ensemble: bodice and skirt, ca. 1905
Worn by Ann Weideman Brunnier (American, 1885-1970)

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Mrs. H.J. Brunnier, 61.12a-b

Photograph by Randy Dodson, courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style

(cont'd)

The exhibition continues chronologically to explore how the city's geographic location further contributed to the blossoming of international trade in the city, including the rise of department stores as importers of European haute couture to the city in the mid-20th century. Their importation aligned with the city's active social calendar, itself fueled by the city's vibrant philanthropic and charitable sectors. With these events offering opportunities for fashion and civic leaders to dress their best, *Fashioning San Francisco* will feature gowns, cocktail dresses, and evening attire by European couturiers such as Pierre Balmain and Christian Dior (Figure 2) — many once retailed by the city's department stores and worn to major society events. The exhibition will also dedicate a section to the most indispensable piece in a wardrobe, “the little black dress,” which emerged a fashionable, yet socially democratic garment in the 20th century.

San Franciscans have a long history of being among the first to embrace the experimental in dress, both supporting and wearing designers with a penchant for the radical. Japanese designers such as Rei Kawakubo, Issey Miyake, Junya Watanabe, and Yohji Yamamoto will be featured in a section that explores how the avant-garde

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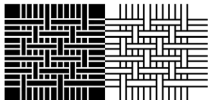
Figure 2. Christian Dior (French, 1905-1957)

Christian Dior (France, est. 1947) *Venus*
evening gown, Fall/Winter 1949-1950 Haute
Couture

Modeled by Helen Berneice Fingado Green
(American, 1923-2001) at an I. Magnin &
Company fashion show, San Francisco,
September 8, 1949

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of
I. Magnin & Company, 49.25.1a-c

Photograph by Randy Dodson, courtesy of
the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style

(cont'd)

creatives redefined conventional fashion in the 20th and 21st centuries. *Fashioning San Francisco* will also explore the work of Western designers who have been inspired by the aesthetics of Asian, African, and other international cultures to address issues of cultural appropriation, complicating and decolonizing existing fashion narratives. Further, the exhibition will honor San Francisco Bay Area women civic leaders, business owners, and public influencers through the “power suits” they wore as they helped shape and build the city. Indicative of San Francisco, these suits embody the city’s specific climate, terrain, and varied aesthetics, presenting San Francisco as a working city for confident women (Figure 3). The exhibition will conclude with a selection of shoes from the Museums’ holdings, highlighting a mix of materials and styles that reflect the diverse roles and tastes of the San Franciscans who wore them.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, which will serve as the handbook to the Museums’ fashion holdings as well as offer additional insights on the exhibition themes from an array of local, national, and international scholars, as well as a suite of public programs and digital activations. Stay tuned for more updates!



Figure 3. John Galiano (British, b. Gibraltar, 1960)

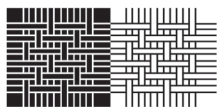
Givenchy (France, est. 1952)

Suit ensemble: jacket and skirt,
Fall/Winter 1996 Haute Couture

Worn by Georgette “Dodie” Rosekrans
(American, 1919–2010) to Gordon Getty’s
birthday party, San Francisco, 1996

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of
Mrs. John N. Rosekrans, Jr., 2012.42.111a-b

Photograph by Randy Dodson,
courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums
of San Francisco



To Document is to Acknowledge: Graphic Documentation as Means of Conservation

By Sarah Flores Rodríguez, former intern at the Textile Conservation Lab, fifth-year student at the Escuela de Conservación y Restauración de Occidente, Guadalajara, México

From February to June, I was a textile conservation intern with the Textile Conservation Lab at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. During this time, I had the opportunity to be involved in multiple conservation projects for the Museums' permanent collection and treatments for the upcoming exhibition *Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style*.

As my main project, I began the conservation treatment of a beadwork belt from an evening dress ca. 1924 designed by Lucile (Lady Duff Gordon, English, 1863-1935) (2005.153.6). The dress was made of lamé fabric with paper flower appliqué. The beaded waist belt is sewn around a padded belt roll; the two ends hang at the front and end with attached beaded tassels.

An important part of the treatment involved detailed graphic documentation to explain and share the assessment, treatment proposal, and final results, serving also as a path for decision-making and conceptualizing treatment proposals. The complexity of the treatment and graphic documentation process makes the uses and outcomes of the project well-worth sharing.

Documentation is one of the main pillars of preventive conservation. A thorough description of an artwork can go a long way when writing a treatment proposal or assessment. In many ways, to name is to acknowledge. A detailed explanation is greatly appreciated, especially if future conservators want to understand the construction process or the series of previous conservation treatments or campaigns and the decision-making behind them. But, as much as a detailed text may be appreciated for future reference, sometimes words are not enough — or may even be too much.¹

Among other things, the weight of the hanging pieces, the aging of the silk thread core, and the presence of previous repairs caused breaks to the construction as well as bead loss and distortion on the pattern grid configuration. All of this evidenced the risky condition of the object, as any handling resulted in more breakage and the further loss of beads.

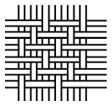


Figure 1. Hanging belt, stabilization for handling – before treatment diagram

¹Boudalis, G. (2015) "A Drawing is Worth a Thousand Words" Drawing as a tool for the documentation of historic bookbinding structures', *ICON News*, (59), pp. 11–13.

When initially trying to describe this in words, the need for diagrams quickly became apparent. Because English is not my first language, having a visual aid to explain what I observed in my studies of the artwork made communication simpler for me. The decision-making for treatment with the textile conservators was also faster, as diagrams served as a quick tool to share hours of study on the belt into concise and well-informed consultation sessions. During this process, I often felt like I had a lack of words, even in my native language, to explain what I was seeing. Drawing forced me to closely observe details and produce a faithful reproduction. The diagram was abstract but remained simple to read and interpret. This is also the main difference between just taking pictures and creating visual aids, though neither require language in their construction.

(continues on page 5)



To Document is to Acknowledge: Graphic Documentation as Means of Conservation

(cont'd)

To try and make the image more simple, I made a black-and-white diagram of the belt before treatment. Additionally, the drawing process involved a study of the pattern and elements of the beadwork to document the current state of the belt, referencing parts of the structure that were considered complete. This diagram also became a helpful tool in the assessment process, as it provides a clear image of the previously mentioned deteriorations, without any background, it separated the belt as the only element of the current treatment and focused the discussion on the beadwork as opposed to the whole dress, which needs additional treatment.

Before proceeding with treatment, it was necessary to understand how the belt was constructed. Referencing the diagram and the belt itself, I made a graphic proposal of how the different beads were organized to create square units and rows and then a whole section finished with tassels. With a clear concept for the desired appearance, I began bibliographical research² for beadwork techniques and tested them until I found one that achieved the same look and movement as the original.

After choosing a sample, the beading technique was applied to reconstruct parts of the belt where the thread was fragile, broken, and tangled. In doing this, the mockup became a template. I traced over its path and the method of each sample to later evaluate the results and reference how to replicate each of them. As the treatment progressed, I took the same diagram as a starting point and made alterations to show different proposals for treatment, document progress, and identify the location of replacement beads as I began to reconstruct the affected areas.

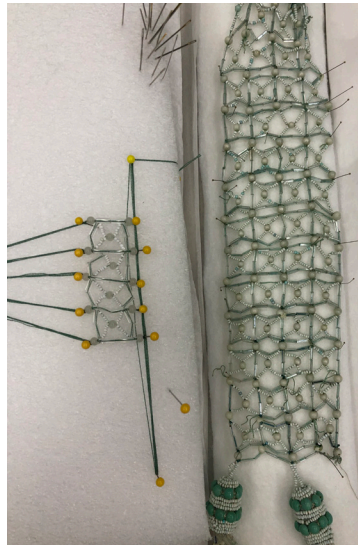
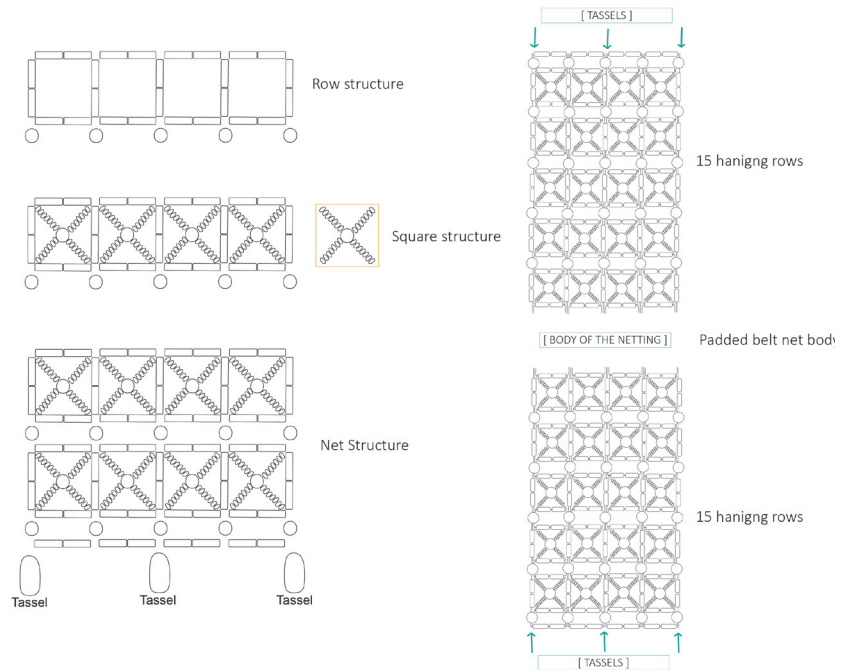
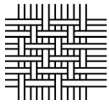


Figure 2.
Structure and elements diagram (top);
sample comparison (bottom)

As I moved forward with treatment and neared the conclusion of my internship, we realized that the reconstruction of the other hanging element would have to be completed at a later stage by staff at the Textile Conservation Lab. With the goal of providing a useful reference for future treatments, I transformed the previous diagram of sample evaluations corresponding to the applied techniques on the belt into a step-by-step guide. I wrote it in simple terms so that anyone could understand it, regardless of the beadwork study hours they had, and with enough detail that it could be replicated to achieve a similar result.

²Moss, Kathlyn, and Alice Scherer. 1992. *The New Beadwork*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

(continues on page 6)



To Document is to Acknowledge: Graphic Documentation as Means of Conservation

(cont'd)

The treatment of the proper right hanging side of the belt concluded on June 12, 2023, with a total of 98 treatment hours. All diagrams are now part of the object's conservation file.

I express my gratitude once again to the Textile Arts Council for all the support throughout my internship, as well as to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Textile Conservation team. Thank you for supporting my need to draw everything out!

Figure 3. Reconstruction Handout

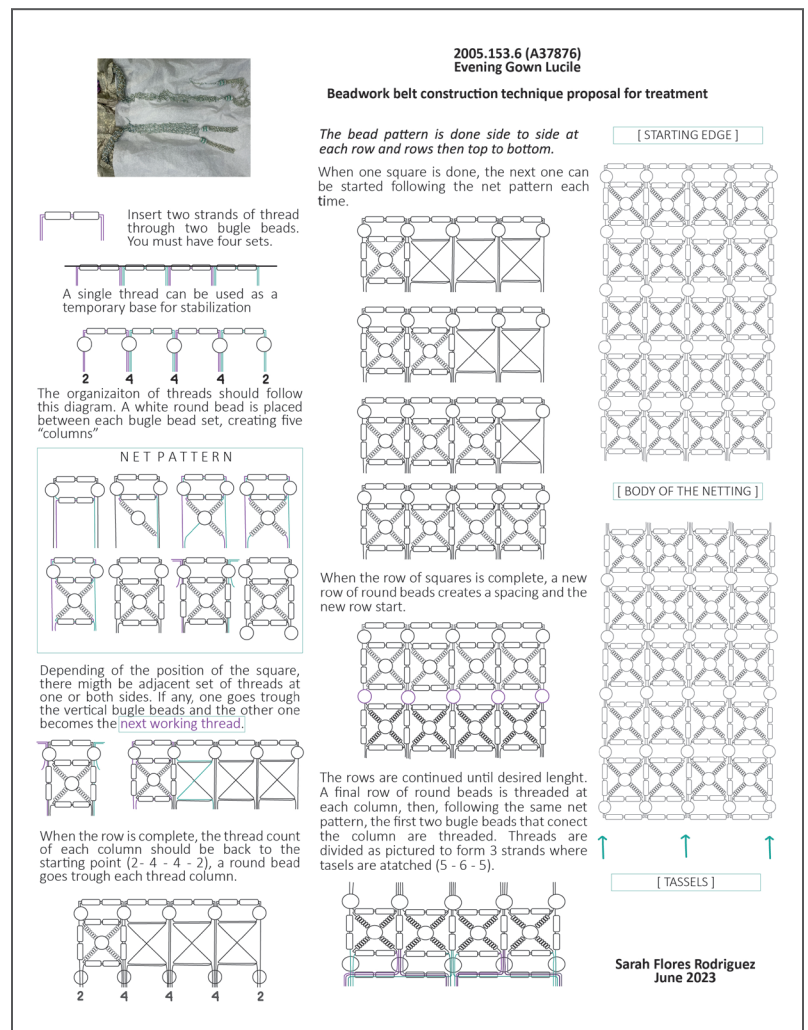
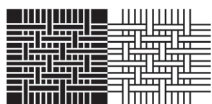


Figure 4. Before and after treatment, with detailed view



From Shirley Juster, Textile Arts Council Board Chair

September 2023

As I write my final newsletter message as the board chair of the Textile Arts Council, I look back on my five-year term with a deep sense of how outstanding is TAC. Our accomplishments at TAC have been extraordinary.



Past Textile Arts Council Events: First Talk & Tea, Bazaar Happiness, and Bazaar Magic (L to R)

Among the highlights:

- In June of 2019, we hosted our first Talk & Tea fundraiser, in conjunction with a presentation **The Beauty Who Changed the Metrics of Fashion: From Rubens to Jean Paul Gaultier** by fashion historian Ya'ara Keydar at the Legion of Honor. We followed this with a **Talk & Tour: Fashion in the Belle Époque, from Tissot to Callot** in January 2020. For both events, attendance was more than 100 people, and we also met our fundraising goals.

Then came the pandemic, and our board and our membership more than rose to the occasion – they excelled!

- Our **Member News** launched in April 2020. It served as an amazing tool to keep our members connected. So many of you, while isolated in your home studios, shared the challenges and inspirations of your creative efforts in the stressful pandemic environment.
- Recognizing our role as textile artisans, the Museums approached us to make protective masks for the security staff. The response was enthusiastic! TAC contributed more than 200 hand-made masks in a wide range of colors, fabrics, and patterns. We had the most fashionably masked security team of any San Francisco museum!
- In August 2020, board members Ellin Klor and Shelley Wells created a four-part series on the life and work of appliqué artist William Morris. It was our first venture into virtual programming, and it was hugely popular, attracting audiences from all over the world. Based on this success, we began offering all our Saturday lectures virtually that September.

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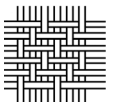
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From the Board Chair

(cont'd)

• One of our newest projects is the Bay Area Fiber Artists Archive, a collection of short videos highlighting the work and the artistic process of local fiber artists. Our first video features quiltmaker Alice Beasley, and we have just recently published fiber artist and weaver Kay Sekimachi's video. In the works is our third project, pairing Janet Lipkin and Jean Cacicedo, longtime friends and colleagues who were leaders in the art-to-wear movement of the early 1970s.

Please visit the **BAFAA** page on our website (<https://www.textileartscouncil.org/bafa>) to view the videos of Alice Beasley and Kay Sekimachi.

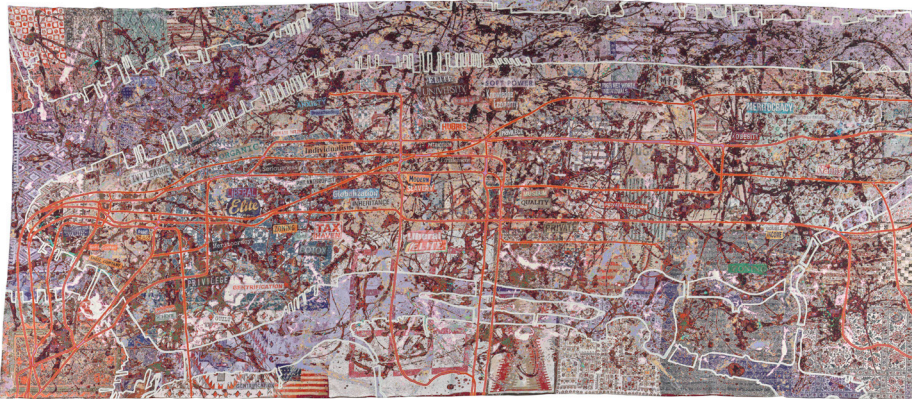


Alice Beasley



Kay Sekimachi

- Over the years, TAC has maintained its financial support of the Museums' textile exhibitions, including *Contemporary Muslim Fashions* (2018), *Patrick Kelly: Runway of Love* (2021) and *Guo Pei: Couture Fantasy* (2022). We have also contributed to the upcoming *Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style*, which opens on January 20, 2024. Watch for member events connected to this exciting exhibition which showcases the Museums' extraordinary collection of twentieth- and twenty-first-century high fashion and haute couture.
- Through the TAC endowment fund, we continue to purchase important works of art for the Textile Department's permanent collection. In 2018, we contributed to the purchase of a highly decorated hospital scrub top in conjunction with the *Summer of Love* exhibition. In 2019, we purchased 6 quilts by celebrated Bay Area quilters from the Eli Leon collection. One of these quilters, Rosie Lee Tompkins, was featured in our Saturday lecture on September 23, 2023. Most recently, in honor of our former curator in charge of costume and textile arts Jill D'Alessandro, we participated in the Museums' purchase of Grayson Perry's tapestry entitled *Large Expensive Abstract Painting*.

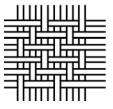


Large Expensive Abstract Painting
2019

Cotton, wool, tapestry weave
115 x 270 7/8 in. (292 102 x 688.024 cm)
Museum purchase, Textile Arts Trust Fund,
Textile Arts Council Endowment Fund in
honor of Jill
D'Alessandro, 2023.10

Photograph by Randy Dodson, courtesy of
the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

We continue to design our events around your in-person participation. Our Saturday lectures are now being presented in the Koret Auditorium, giving you the opportunity to visit the museum and to meet with fellow TAC members and guest speakers. Koret Auditorium, de Young museum, Saturday lectures will continue to be broadcast via Zoom as well, with recordings archived for future viewing by our members. Our Fall 2023 calendar covers an exciting range of lectures, activities and travel.



From the Board Chair

(cont'd)

Note our Calendar of Events for Fall 2023!

Saturday Lectures:

- **September 23** - Mother-Taught: The Matrilinear Needlework of Madalena dos Santos Reinbolt, Rosie Lee Tompkins and Pacita Abad with Dr. Julia Bryan-Wilson, Professor of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University
- **October 21** - Sacred Bling: African Diasporic Beadwork with artist Demetri Broxton, whose work is featured in *Crafting Radicality: Bay Area Artists from the Svane Gift*
- **November 18** - Setting the Stage: Retail Store Design and Display in the Twentieth Century, with Dr. Alessandra Wood, PhD, professor, author and design historian

Tours and Workshops:

- **September 9** - Innovations in Fiber Arts XI Exhibition led by Judith Content at Sebastopol Center for the Arts
- **October 3** - Fundraising Event: A private screening of Eleanor Coppola's video, *A Visit to China's Miao Country* in the Coppola screening room in Rutherford and lunch at Inglenook Winery
- **October 22** - Studio tour with fiber artist Barbara Shapiro at her San Francisco studio
- **November 1** - Sausalito Tour: ICB Artists Association Collective and fiber/Dimensions

Travel:

- **September 2023** - Reservations for our September tour of London led by Melissa Leventon sold out in record time. We are so pleased to once again offer overseas textile travel.

Special Events:

- **November 4** - The annual Textile Bazaar is at St. Mary's Cathedral event center once again. Shop returning vendors and meet some exciting new ones.
- **December 6** - Members Holiday Party will also be held at St. Mary's Cathedral event center.

I have so thoroughly enjoyed my time as chair, primarily due to the wonderful board with whom I have had the opportunity to serve. I owe each of them a huge thank you for all they have done to uphold and expand on the knowledge, events, and services that TAC provides to our community.

Another thank you is to all our members. You have shared your work with us, you made the security team's masks, and you continued to support TAC through both virtual and in-person participation. I have so much enjoyed meeting so many of you.

Through the leadership of our recently appointed curator in charge of costume and textile arts, Laura L. Camerlengo, in tandem with our newly-elected board chair, Leslee Budge, I am confident that TAC will continue to support the museums and the textile community. I look forward to working with them.

Shirley Juster

Textile Arts Council Board Chair



TEXTILE BAZAAR

Antique ♦ Ethnic ♦ Vintage ♦ Contemporary

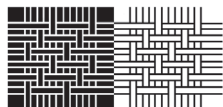


Save the Date!

Textile Bazaar
will be held on
November 4, 2023
St. Mary's Cathedral
Event Center

Sponsored by

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Textile Arts Council

deYoung \ fine arts museums of san francisco

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