

TEXTILES
OF THE PAST
INSPIRE TODAY'S
DESIGNERS



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New knowledge about the textiles, environment and society of the past benefits today's and tomorrow's designers.

When museum visitors today see that ancient garments had bright colors, they can give a little salute to the Center for Textile Research. The center has conducted comprehensive technical and historical analyses to attain new knowledge about clothing of the past and thus established that those faded finds contain traces of vivid colors. Although the main purpose of the Center for Textile Research is to study the historical relationship between textiles, environment and society, the new knowledge also benefits designers of today and tomorrow.

Ancient design in new clothes

Textile researchers attend workshops organized for companies by the Center for Culture and Experience Economy, an independent public institution founded by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Business and Growth, whose goal is to generate growth and innovation through experience-based business development. The researchers have also held courses for students at the Kolding School of Design.

"We recognize that designers' tasks differ from ours, but both we and the designers benefit greatly from our dialog. It is important for us to share our results and make research available to interested parties," emphasizes Marie-Louise Nosch, leader of the Center for Textile Research.

Thus, the center's research may underlie future fashion design inspired by the clothes worn by ancient warriors and Renaissance nobles. Nosch gives another example illustrating the significance of research outside the narrow group of researchers:

"Occasionally, directors of historical films and plays ask us for advice," she says.

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Danish textile research with international impact

In recent years, the Center for Textile Research has made Denmark an international textile research hub. This is primarily due to the abundance of textiles in Danish museum collections compared with those in other countries.

"This can be explained by the ancient burial traditions and, not least, the soil in Denmark, which have both served to preserve many materials in bogs," says Nosch.

Since its establishment in 2005, the Center for Textile Research has been able to set the agenda for textile research in Europe. Thanks to two major lecture and study tours to China and India in 2009 and 2012, the center has also established a global reputation.

Clothing remnants testify to power and social structure

Researchers study ancient textiles as a means of explaining migration, trade routes and linguistic contexts. This is part of the research development seen in recent years, in which textiles and clothing are not merely considered as objects in themselves but as holding answers to researchers' questions about production, the use of clothing and its role in a broader perspective.

In the same way as gold, textiles have been a means of showing wealth; studies of linguistic terms, weaving methods and wool types reveal a great deal about ancient communities. However, Nosch points out that an objective truth about how people

dressed in the past may be very hard to find, but researchers are now in a much better position to explain how they believe people dressed in the past and on what facts they base this view.

Research suggests that as early as the Bronze Age, about 3500 years ago, organized textile production took place in the Mediterranean area. People who were able to control, influence and organize textile production also had the power to influence and change society. Furthermore, research provides a more thorough understanding of an old craft and its practitioners and thus more in-depth knowledge about ancient communities.

Textile research is a research area involving conservators, restorers, archaeologists, historians and ethnologists and in which tools used in natural sciences are gaining increasing importance. The center's organizational affiliations help make the research useful to others.

"We benefit from being part of the University of Copenhagen and the National Museum of Denmark and thus from our close relations with the many local museums around the country," Nosch explains. "This enables us to communicate our new discoveries quickly."



FACTS:

Center for Textile Research (CTR)
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 www.ctr.hum.ku.dk