

Projektbeskrivning – To fund the research and the material for a study at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York - Standardized methodology in visual documentation of historic textiles

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This stipend will be used to fund the research and the material for a study at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York where expertise, equipment and basis for this project are already available. This knowledge is based on my previous researching experience on multispectral imaging techniques at The Met.

This study will lay the ground for the standardized protocol we, as a future step, aim to introduce and develop on a Swedish historic textile and upholstery collection.

Standardized methodology in visual documentation of historic textiles.

This study combines the usage of Multispectral Imaging and X-ray techniques in historical textiles and upholstery. While Multispectral Imaging techniques could be used to identify and map natural dyes, X-ray techniques offers a unique insight in the construction of an object. By developing a complete Multispectral image set we want to emphasize the importance of using a standardized methodology¹ in the visual documentation of historic textiles and upholstery collections. Multispectral imaging techniques are increasingly being viewed as a powerful method with which to survey collections containing large amounts of material, as they allow the visualization and spatial localization of materials under different wavelengths of illumination, using readily accessible, inexpensive technology. The resultant multispectral image sets often act as “maps” which highlight particular physical properties, allowing the objects to be viewed in a completely novel manner and emphasizing relationships between materials within the object, and often, between similar materials within a collection of related objects. These physical properties are frequently employed for the tentative identification of these materials. However analytical data to support these assignments is rarely provided in such cases. In addition, such assignments are often made on the basis of comparison between images that have not been acquired or processed according to standardized methodologies. This study focuses on the digital documentation via such Multispectral imaging techniques of the materials used in the historical upholstery textiles investigated and further analysis by HPLC-PDA of a number of dyes chosen from a selection of objects from the Metropolitan Museum collection. In this first part of the study a combined methodology employing dye analysis and Multispectral imaging techniques will be applied to identify and map natural dyes found in historic upholstery textiles. While historical textiles in general have gained more interest over the last decades, upholstery textiles are still seriously understudied and their polychromatic aspect has not been often analytically explored to date. The study will be conducted at The Sherman Fairchild Centre for Object Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with the supervision of Nancy Britton, Upholstery Conservator at the named institution. The second part of this study will focus on X-radiography, an effective and non-intrusive instrument for documenting upholstery materials and techniques. By exposing an artifact to radiation of various frequencies material of different density within the upholstery can be thoroughly examined and documented. In the process of analyzing the digitalized Xray images, the techniques and materials used can be identified in order to validate, add information or highlight any discrepancies to the previous mentioned Multispectral Imaging documentation.