

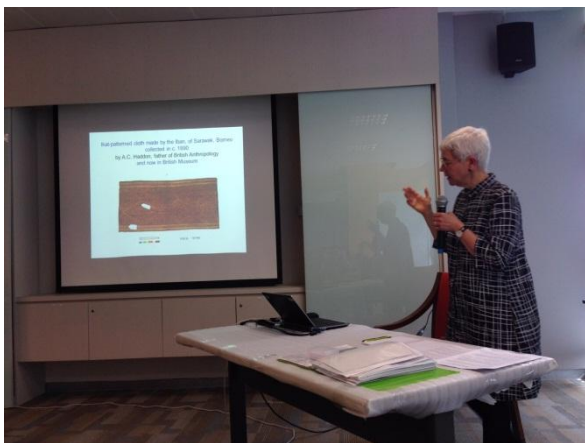
Workshop: 'Material Culture Approaches to Care, Conservation and Display' by Dr Dinah Eastop

3rd – 5th February 2015 at Heritage Conservation Centre

Text by Sarah Jane Benson, Assistant Conservator (Textiles)

A two day lecture-based workshop was held at HCC for conservators, registrars and collection management together with some curators and exhibition team from the NHB museums. The focus of the workshop was based on identifying different ways artefacts may be interpreted and how the principles and ethics within museum settings varies and affects these interpretations. Dr Dinah Eastop was invited to conduct this workshop to benefit from her international reputation on her research and projects spanning from her original training in textile conservation to analysing the interplay between material properties and social attributes of collections. She has worked widely with ICCROM and has done workshops and lectures for CollAsia giving her a rare insight into some of the challenges we may face in Southeast Asia.

Lectures based on ethics and interpretation of artefacts were given with case studies as well as hands on activities. An object's biography and how it has changed roles over time was discussed and debated upon which time period might be represented within a museum setting and how conservation treatments and display are affected by this interpretation process. The value of intangible heritage was discussed with case studies and activities such as how almost all societies in the world may play the same games or versions of them shown with the example of string figures. Dr Dinah also presented some of her other projects which included a digitisation and access project done for The National Archives UK utilising the new technology of Polynomial Texture Mapping allowing tactile sensations to be experienced online.



Dinah Eastop presenting on object biographies



Participants creating string figures

The final day was held with the textile conservators to further discuss the issues with treatment approaches that are seen within the National Collection; such as retaining original materials and /or later repairs and restoration as well as discussing the options for artefacts that are 'self-destructing' and in many ways beyond current conservation practices. A collaborative discussion about upholstered furniture was organised with textiles and objects conservators to help aid conservators in gaining a better understanding of how to approach the treatment of this type of artefact, which is fairly rare within the National Collection.

In summary the value of thorough and informative documentation can never be substituted and is necessary to keep the biography, and in some cases the value, of the object accurate.



Dinah examining a Peranakan upholstered chair



Textiles and objects conservators discussing treatment options with Dinah