

OPEN STORAGE SPACE: ARCHIVE OF TEXTILES ONE KILOMETER LONG

Valentina Turina, Giulia Pallottini (Torino, Italy),

Olha Kulihina (Zaporizhia, Ukraine)

Предметом дослідження є нове приміщення для зберігання та експонування колекції археологічного текстилю в Єгипетському музеї в Турині. Зала з 9 вітринами проектувалась для безпечного розташування більш ніж 700 предметів текстилю різних розмірів, способу виготовлення та походження. Приміщення планується використовувати як дидактичний простір логічно інтегрований в експозицію музею.

Subject of the presentation is a new storage space storing and exposing the collection of archaeological textiles of the Egyptian Museum in Turin. The project was planned as a room with 9 showcases and more than 700 textile objects of different dimensions, manufacture type and provenance. The storage was aimed to become a didactic space logically integrated into the museum exposition.

Key words: restoration, textile, storage organization, collection management, open storage space.

Introduction

This work is an attempt to systematize approaches for creating a stable and neutral environment for a large number of objects. It explores practice of rehousing textiles of different dimensions and contexts in terms of conservation and visual availability.

During realization of the project The Archive of Textiles the method of open storage space was used. Meeting museum requirements of safekeeping and accessibility for viewers, the method of open storage organization in the museum resolves space issues and facilitates the ways of presenting information about objects.

The paper is based on practical experience in textile conservation of Museo Egizio, presents methodology based on Egyptological and conservational research

approved in contemporary museum practice, based on recent publications in conservation and museum management.

The aim of the paper is first to describe examples of integrating open storage spaces into museum exposition and the ways it changes perception of the museum space for the visitors. Then, to describe the planning and realization of «Archive of Textiles», open didactic space which can provide a considerably stable indoor environment for archeological materials and attract visitors by its logical and aesthetic organization. The last part will be dedicated to a case study with all processes and conservation treatment.

Open storages

The concept of storage spaces implemented into exposition gained interest in '60s and '70s with the development of an idea of democratization of museum collections. Even though institutions are directly engaged in the safe preservation of the objects, the visitors are the real owners of the collection; showing its viability in museum practice, this method is used by institutions for safekeeping and putting large collections on display [1].

An important reason for implementing open storage spaces into permanent exposition is the possibility of displaying in showcases many objects gathered by typological and material principles [2].

Showcases areas with ceramic, stone and metal objects could attract interest of historian enthusiasts and professionals in specific fields of research. According to one of the curators of Metropolitan Museum in New York, this embodiment gives the opportunity for specialists to feel more comfortable and get familiar to the objects in a space that seems unpretentious [3].

Before planning Textile Archival project, several open storages have already existed at the Museo Egizio of Turin. There are different areas, included into permanent museum exposition, where the objects are stored according to the material principles, historical timeframes and conceptual sense [4]. «In the Research of Life» (Fig. 1), «Gallery of Material Culture» open storage (Fig. 2), «Gallery of Material

Culture» open storage (Fig. 3) are represented by exhibit cabinets and thematic installations.

The Archive of Textiles

The idea of creating a new storage space for textile objects in Egyptian Museum was born in 2016. The purpose of the new didactic area was performing the function of open collection storage for textiles of Pharaonic period. Although the realization of the project was postponed continuously due to the pandemic, in 2022 finally appeared an opportunity to implement it.

The project «Archive of Textiles» (Fig. 4) developed in cooperation of specialists of Museo Egizio, including managers, architects, engineers, conservator and registration workers took place during 2022–2023 years. Sketches of fixing structures were developed by textile restorer Valentina Turina, as well as was planned the general appearance of the room and conservation approaches (Fig. 5). Involving textile conservators Valentina Turina, Giulia Pallottini and painting conservator Olha Kulihina the new space was realized and ready for opening in October 2023.

Among the vast and heterogeneous number of finds that make up the majority of the collection of the Egyptian Museum of Turin, the textiles of the Pharaonic period represent a fascinating collection, but little explored. Similar textiles, although mostly lost now, were once present in all contexts: palatial, domestic, temple and funeral, which required that they were produced in huge quantities [5]. Textile collection represents scientific material, the chronology of which covers a wide timeframe, from 3900 BC. to the sixth century AD.

The aim of the new exposition space was to give visitors the idea on quantity of the textiles conserved in the museum collection and collect all the textile together in an appropriate conservative way [6].

During the project around 1000 metres of archaeological textiles was treated, 80 textile objects of big dimensions and around 700 fragments of smaller dimensions. One of the major challenges encountered during conservation was performing preventive measures on larger textile objects. Each of these objects boast lengths

exceeding 15 meters with a height of the fabric between 120/150 cm. Certain common characteristics of archaeological finds such as fragility, fragmentation and dehydration of the fibre, therefore contrasted with the large dimensions of the cloth comparable to those of carpets and tapestries, made every conservation operation exceptionally complex.

Preliminary study

To make the Archive of Textiles possible, due to the elevated number of pieces, its different dimensions and condition, the most difficult part of the project was the planning stage and definition of the materials [7].

The first phase of the work involved numerical recognition of the pieces and the check of their collocation on the database and in the museum. All the data were collected in a list for calculating the square meters and then the number of showcases needed.

The second phase involved the control of the size of the textiles, followed by subdivision of the textiles into two macro-categories: the wide textiles to roll on the tubes on the bar, the bandages and small textiles to put in the drawers (Fig. 6).

It was necessary also to separate the wide textiles into two groups: the ones that needed a single tube support, the others with ovoidal section tubes. For this reason it was necessary to evaluate the conservation state of the objects depending on the percentage and the position of lacunas on the textile, whether in central or perimetral areas.

The dimensions of the tubes for wide textiles have been studied and calibrated according to the needs of objects; the ovoidal section tube was studied for very wide textiles and/or textiles in bad condition, in order to minimize the number of turns while rolling [8].

The conservation treatment: the case study of S.13967/3

All the process and the conservation treatment can be resumed with a very particular case study: the artifact S.13967/3, coming from the «Tomba degli Ignoti»¹, with a length of more than 20 meters.

Transparent holder tubes were made in polymethyl methacrylate. Safe storage of the artifact S. 13967/3 required preferably an ovoidal section tube, for this reason two single tubes have been pierced and joined with bolts (Fig. 7). To make the surface less rigid a layer of closed-cell expanded polyethylene (*plastazote*) with a thickness of 4 mm was glued to the tube with EVA hot glue [9]. Between the original textile and the *plastazote* was put a layer of not dyed 100% cotton textile.

The second phase of the treatment was dry cleaning with a vacuum cleaner (Fig. 8). The most fragile areas were cleaned though the net between the original textile and the nozzle of the cleaner for additional protection [10].

Conservation treatment proceeded by the humidification to decrease the folds. To smooth out the fabric were used glass weights, transparent to control the folds (Fig. 9).

As far as the consolidation intervention was concerned, it was decided to place the undyed cotton fabric, not fixed to the original, between the original textile and the tube to protect the archeological textile and facilitate rolling (Fig. 10).

After installing an object on the tube a net case in neutral colors safely closed with Velcro (Fig. 11) was realized to keep the object in the correct position while fixed in the showcase (Fig. 12).

Conclusions

In conclusion, our comprehensive approach to the conservation and presentation of archaeological textiles within the «Archive of Textiles» project at the Museo Egizio of Turin reflects a commitment to preserving cultural heritage with meticulous care and innovation. Exploration of open storage spaces and integration of didactic elements have not only contributed to stable and neutral environment needed

¹ «Tomb of Unknown».

for the preservation of diverse textile collection but have also enhanced the museum's engagement with visitors.

Through detailed photography and precise labeling, an exhaustive record of the unique characteristics of each textile was meticulously compiled [11].

This systematic approach not only ensured a thorough documentation of the artifacts but also contributed to the accuracy and completeness of the museum's database.

The dedication to aligning physical artifacts with digital records underscores the commitment to maintaining the highest standards of documentation in the preservation of cultural heritage, in order to facilitate and promote new research and studies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Dollery D. A methodology of preventive conservation for a large, expanding and mixed archaeological collection, *Studies in Conservation*. 1994. 39:sup2, 69–72, DOI: 10.1179/sic.39.Supplement-2.69.

2. Pogorzelska I. Icons of Polissia as a Source for Costume Study in the end of XVI–XVII centuries. URL: <http://dspace.nbuv.gov.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/89525/16-Pogorzelska.pdf>. (Last accessed: 31.08.2023).

3. Malichoutsaki M. Museum Storages: The Hidden Treasures of The Museums. *Mind The Museum*. 2020. URL: <https://www.mindthemuseum.com/post/museum-storages-the-hidden-treasures-of-the-museums>. (Last accessed: 22.12.2023).

4. Thickett D., Lee L.R. Practical methods for Display and storage Occasional Paper Number 111. *The British Museum*, 2004. P. 26–29.

5. Spinazzi-Lucchesi C. The Unwound Yarn Birth and Development of Textile Tools Between Levant and Egypt. *Antichistica. Studi Orientali*. 2018. URL: https://www.academia.edu/36975219/The_Unwound_Yarn_Birth_and_Development_of_Textile_Tools_Between_Levant_and_Egypt (Last accessed: 10.11.2023).

6. Keene S. Managing conservation in museums. *In Routledge eBooks*. 2012. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080510866> (Last accessed: 01.10.2023).
7. Orlofsky P., Trupin D. The Role of Connoisseurship in Determining the Textile Conservator's Treatment Options. *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*. Vol. 32. 1993. № 2. P. 109–118.
8. Pisani C.P. La "coperta" Guicciardini Firenze: Edifir. *Problemi Di Conservazione E Restauro*. 2010. P. 27.
9. Down J. L., MacDonald, M. A., Tétreault, J., & Williams, R. S. Adhesive Testing at the Canadian Conservation Institute: An Evaluation of Selected Poly(Vinyl Acetate) and Acrylic Adhesives. *Studies in Conservation*. Vol. 41. 1996. № 1. P. 19–44. URL: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1506550> (Last accessed: 17.09.2023).
10. Brooks M. M., Eastop D. Matter out of Place: Paradigms for Analyzing Textile Cleaning, *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*. Vol. 45. 2006. № 3. P. 171–181.
11. Borla M. Il riscontro inventariale dei reperti archeologici conservati nei depositi del Museo Antichità Egizie di Torino: gli interventi di ricognizione e imballaggio dei tessili faraonici, *Quaderni della Soprintendenza Archeologica del Piemonte (QSAP)*. 2012. № 27. P. 373–377.



Figure 1 «In the research of life» open storage.



Figure 2 «Gallery of Material Culture» animal mummies and pottery storage.



Figure 3 «Gallery of Material Culture» open storage.



Figure 4 The new «Archive of textiles» open storage.

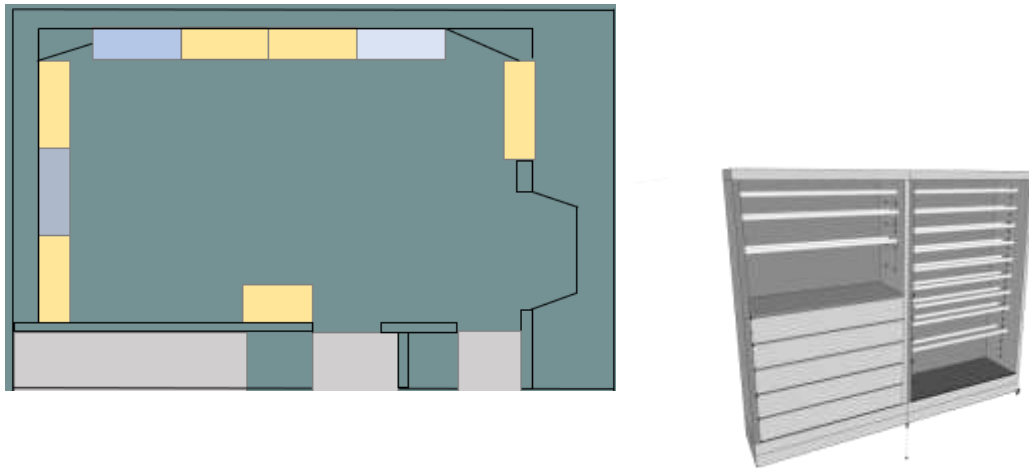


Figure 5 The map of the room and the showcases.



Figure 6 The tubes in the bar and the small textiles in the drawers.



Figure 7 Preparing the ovoidal section tube.



Figure 8 Dry cleaning with vacuum cleaner.



Figure 9 The humidification process of the textile.



Figure 10 The cut of the undyed cotton.



Figure 11 The object with the Velcro.



Figure 12 The mounting.