

The Museum Collections of Craft Teacher Training. Cultural heritage serving education and research

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Abstract

Craft science only got its name in the early 1990s. Its field of research combines science, art and technology. The Collections of Craft Teacher Training in the Helsinki University Museum present the link between tradition and modern science.

The first school of women's handicraft in Finland was opened in Helsinki 1881, and four years later the teacher training was started at the school. In 1975 the school was integrated with the University of Helsinki, and today the section of craft science and textiles teacher education has two professorships.

The teachers in the school collected and donated textile objects for teaching demonstrations and research. Today the collections comprise some 6,000 objects ranging from adults' and children's clothing accessories to textiles made by using various techniques. The oldest of these textiles date from the mid-1800s.

In 2003 the Museum Collections of Craft Science were transferred to the Helsinki University Museum. The collections are now taken care of by professional museum staff in close cooperation with craft science lecturers. The lecturers still use the collections in their teaching and research, and theses have been made about museum textiles. The collections are used in teaching designing and making of textiles, costume and textile history, and object-based research to examine crafts skills in different periods, the relationship of such skills to art and fashion as well as the relationship between hand-made and machine-made objects. This collection is, in fact, one of the rare museum collections in the Helsinki University, which still are in educational and scientific use.



Fig. 1 - Idi Lindholm teaching the secrets of genuine lace in 1941.

The museum collection as a tool

Studies in textiles teacher education combine manual skills and scientific and applied subject-specific knowledge with pedagogical skills. The majority of textiles teachers are employed in the educational sector as teachers. Graduates from the education also work in retail, industry and media. The key aim of textiles teacher education is to ensure that crafts and crafts skills remain part of general education and lifelong learning. Crafts can be used to develop creative and cognitive processes, such as planning skills and problem-solving, as well as organization and evaluation of work.

One of the challenges of the handicraft teachers is to convey knowledge of our ancestors' handicraft skills. The Helsinki University provides web-based material in a tool called *ApuMatti* (helpful Matti). There are also interior textile course materials produced by the craft science and textiles teacher education section: pictures and information about old bed textiles from the Craft Science Museum collections. Through studying museum material, e.g. bridal handicrafts, which were made by hand and

with love for the daughter of the family, the future school teachers learn cultural history (SAARINEN & KUUKKA).



Fig. 2 - Corset from ca 1900.



Fig. 3 – Helsinki School of Handicraft presented a silk case for writing implements at the Paris World's Fair in 1900.

The textile collections offer opportunity to study manual skills as well as the history of fashion and design (KOSKENNURMI-SIVONEN & SALO-MATTILA 2009). Courses presenting the history of women's dresses and evening gowns are held in museum by PhD Ritva Koskennurmi-Sivonen, who has studied the creations of fashion designers. Creating a unique dress is a multimethod case study which bridges the past and the present in investigating individual, handcrafted dresses. Unique dresses and dressmaking are studied in relation to fashion, craft, and their overlapping field which is often referred to as *couture*. Central to the study are the designing and making-up processes, products, and the clients' conceptions of their dresses and their patronage of the 'couturière' (KOSKENNURMI-SIVONEN 1998; 2002).



Fig. 4 - Woman's coat from 1960s, designed by Ulla Bergh.

Education, fashion and craft

The museum pieces in the Collections of Craft Teacher Training represent the training's own history. Since 1881, the teachers themselves have made, collected and donated objects for demonstration in teaching. In regard to outside donations, the teachers have decided what should be kept and what to be given up. Former students have made and donated a large number of the items. The collection also includes tools and implements used in handicraft.

Dressmaking, linen garment sewing and needlework were the three first courses offered at the Helsinki Craft School. These skills were necessary because the majority of dresses, linen garments and knitwear were made by hand. A separate group of the museum collection comprises the almost 600 half- and full-scale models of garments made by teachers and students for teaching purposes. Their chronological distribution reflects how the importance of sewing skills decreased in instruction:

most of this material is from the 1920s to 1940s, and only a few items come from the last few decades (KOSKENNURMI-SIVONEN & SALO-MATTILA 2009; SALO-MATTILA 2000).

The museum collection was established in 1959 when a room was given for the collection, and another one for the curator. First curator, history of handicrafts teacher Hilda Kontturi began to arrange the gathered material. The museum objects were numbered and the corresponding cards were prepared. In 2000-2002 new museum technology was introduced: digital database was created and the most important objects were photographed (SALO-MATTILA 2003).

The Helsinki University Museum was established in 2003 by merging the former university museum specializing in the history of the University of Helsinki, the Collections of Craft Science, the Museum of Medical History, the Museum of the History of Veterinary Medicine and the Museum of the History of Dentistry. From the Collections of Craft Science is on display for example a case for writing implements, which was presented at the Paris world's fair in 1900. The case with embroidery on silk was designed by Helena Westermarck, a teacher at the Helsinki School of Handicraft and a painter. The special exhibition *Close to the Skin* offers a peek to the history of the nightwear and underwear. All the objects in the special exhibition are from the Collections of Craft Science.

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