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Clothing and Identities in the Roman World

A grant from the European Union's Culture Programme (EACEA) has provided a unique opportunity to gather textile experts from all over Europe in a joint research program focusing on Dress and Identity. The project *Clothing and Identities — New Perspectives on Textiles in the Roman World (DressID)* encompasses seven European universities and research institutions, and is coordinated by the Curt-Engelhorn-Stiftung of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen in Mannheim, Germany. The project has a budget of € 4.9 million. From 2007 through 2012, research, publications, conferences and a touring exhibition will be the outcome of the collective focus on the interrelations between dress and identity within and beyond the Roman Empire. The main objectives of the DressID project are to provide a position in cultural history for clothing and textiles in antiquity, and to demonstrate how clothing is a key to identity studies. The interdisciplinary collaboration will strengthen the networks and exchange of knowledge and ideas of European scholars and combine various scientific traditions in Europe.

The Roman Empire

The Roman Empire forms the frame for the project. At the time of its maximum extent in the 2nd century AD, the Roman Empire incorporated the territory of most of the present-day members of the European Union, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean seaboard. It also had an outstretching web of diplomatic and economic relations with peoples living beyond its borders. With its richness in diverse sources — archaeological finds, images and texts — the Roman Empire provides a perfect opportunity for investigations of cultural uniformity and diversity. Its pervading political and administrative structures present an excellent platform for identity studies on all levels.

Clothing and Identity

Clothing serves as a major tool for communication on a non-verbal level. It expresses relational constructions

within groups, and it demonstrates affiliations or debarment as well as ethnicity, social rank, profession, gender and age. Clothing may reveal the regional origin of the bearer, present variations in local costumes, and it reflects the correlation between tradition and innovation in a highly visible way. Dress is used — consciously or unconsciously — to express identity, and it carries information about the ethnic, social or religious affiliation as well as the profession, gender and age of the wearer.

Multidisciplinary research

Numerous textile experts and institutions all over Europe carry out specific investigations concerning Roman clothing on an individual basis. The DressID project provides a platform where researchers with various exploratory foci can interweave their specialist knowledge into a large network of information on textile questions in order to get a broader view and a better understanding of the social significance of clothing in the Roman world. The research is organised as a network of study groups, each headed by two spokespersons. The spokespersons are in charge of communication and organization of the research within specific fields. DressID meets annually at a General Meeting, hosted by the co-operators in the programme. The 2nd General Meeting has just been held in Copenhagen in May 2008 and the next will be held in Chania, Crete in December 2008.

Publications and exhibitions

The research results will be published via scientific publications, articles and monographs, and via public meetings and the media. A major outcome addressing a larger international public is an itinerant exhibition based on the ongoing research, starting in Mannheim in 2011 and hereafter touring around various European cities.

More information can be obtained at www.DressID.eu

Dissertations

Sophie Bergerbrant has been awarded a doctorate at the Stockholm University, Sweden, for her work: *Bronze Age Identities: Costume, Conflict and Contact in Northern Europe 1600-1300 BC* (2007).

Karina Grömer has been awarded a doctorate at the Institute for Pre- and Protohistory, University of Vienna, Austria (Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte Universität Wien) for her work: *Bronzezeitliche Gewebefunde aus Hallstatt - Ihr Kontext in der Textilkunde Mitteleuropas und die Entwicklung der Textiltechnologie zur Eisenzeit* (2007).

Annika Larsson has been awarded a doctorate at the Uppsala University, Sweden, for her work: *Kläd Krigare* (2007).

Marianne Vedeler has been awarded a doctorate at the University in Oslo, Norway, for her work: *Klær og formspråk in norsk middelalder* (2007).

Marina Fischer has received a masters degree at the University of Calgary, Canada, with the work: *The Prostitute and Her Headdress: the Mitra, Sakkos and Keryphalos in Attic Red-figure Vase-painting ca. 550-450 BCE* (2008).

Astrid Geimer has received a masters degree at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, Germany, with the work: *Gefärbte Textilien in vorgeschichtlichen Europa. Funde und Befunde vom Neolithikum bis zur Mitte des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (2007).

Sunniva Wilberg Halvorsen has received a masters degree at the University of Bergen, Norway, for her work: *Myrfunn av tekstiler. - En ny undersøkelse av funnene fra Tegle og Helgeland* (2008).

Agnete Wisti Lassen has received a masters degree at University of Copenhagen, Denmark, with the work: *Textiles and Traders. A Study of the technology, organisation and socioeconomics of textile production in Anatolia in the Middle Bronze Age c. 2000-1700 B.C.* (2008).

Synnove Thingnæs has received a masters degree at the University in Oslo, Norway, with the work: *I enden av en tråd. - Om spesialisert tekstilhåndverk i folkevandringsstid* (2007).

Textile Calendar

June-December 2008

August 2-8: Experiments with archaeology: archaeologists rediscover how textiles and fibres were produced in the past, Lejre Experimental Centre, Denmark
<http://www.english.lejre-center.dk/ACTIVITIES-2008.196.0.html>

August 6-9: Summer workshop, Triste, Spain: dyes with natural plants, lichens and mushrooms
<http://ctr.hum.ku.dk/upload/application/pdf/f51d6748/Tristes%20Workshop.pdf>

August 21-22:
Ötzi, Schnidi and the Reindeer Hunters: Ice Patch Archaeology and Holocene Climate Change, Bern, Switzerland
<http://www.oeschger.unibe.ch/events/conferences/schnidejoch/>

September 24-27: Textiles as Cultural Expressions, 11th Symposium of Textile Society of America, Honolulu, Hawaii
http://textilesociety.org/symposia_2008.htm

October 1-3: Experimental Archaeology Research—new Approaches, Östersund, Sweden
<http://ctr.hum.ku.dk/conferences/oestersund/>

October 8-11: Dyes in History and Archaeology 27, Istanbul, Turkey
<http://www.dha27.com/>

November 6-9: Costume Colloquium: A Tribute to Janet Arnold, Florence, Italy
<http://www.costume-textiles.com/pages/page.asp>

November 13-15: 3rd Ancient Mediterranean Textiles and Dyes Symposium, Naples, Italy

December 5-6: Textiles in Art: from the Bronze Age to the Renaissance, Early Textiles Study Group 12th bi-annual conference, London, UK
<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/Textilesinart/>