



Why leather?

8 September 2011

Institute of Archaeology, UCL, London, UK. The common occurrence of animal skin products, whether leather, furs or rawhide throughout history, prehistory and into the present day attest to their enduring utility and desirability. But why did and do people choose to use these materials? This apparently simple question raises a number of issues.

Animal skins have a range of chemical and physical properties. Processing methods such as rawhide and *cuir bouille* emphasise the stiff and solid properties of skins, while tanning or oil dressing may bring out their soft and supple nature. There is also the distinctive visual appearance of leather and furs. The desirability or otherwise of leather may be attached as much to the qualities of the finished product as to the status of skin acquisition and origins. Skins may be a welcome by-products of animals slaughtered for their meat, or may be the sole reason for breeding and

killing animals. Fake fur and imitation leather are known in the past and present. As resources, leather and furs are readily interchangeable with other materials. This leads to a cross over in materials; shoes are known in leather, textiles and basketry versions, body armour may be made with leather, sheet metal or stuffed textiles.

So why leather? The aim of this session is to consider the role of animal skin products by questioning the nature of the material itself and the values attached to it in specific contexts of time and place. We welcome papers addressing these issues through examples from archaeology, history, anthropology and the present day.

This one-day event is organised by the Archaeological Leather Group (ALG) <http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/>. Please send abstracts of approximately 250 words to Diana Friendship-Taylor (Meetings Co-Ordinator) at piddington.museum@tiscali.co.uk and Barbara Wills (Chair) at nickandbarbara@ntlworld.com. The deadline for abstracts is 7th January 2011. The papers will be made available in electronic format on the ALG website.

Textile Calendar 2011

25 June 2010-19 June 2011: Exhibition *Die Textilsammlung Georg Schweinfurths*, Bode-Museum, Museumsinsel Berlin, Germany

<http://www.smb.museum/smb/kalender/details.php?lang=en&objID=24881&typeId=10>

20-21 January: *Sprechende Bilder, Textilwerkstätten und Erinnerungskultur in staufischer Zeit*, Anna-Reiss-Saal, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen D 5, Mannheim, Germany. www.re.fh-koeln.de

4 February-1 May: Exhibition *Gesponnen geflochten gewoben: Archäologische Textilien zwischen Bodensee und Zuerichsee*, Konstanz, Germany.

8 February-22 May: Exhibition *Basketry: Making Human Nature*, the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

<http://www.scva.org.uk/exhibitions/press/?exhibition=115>

24-30 April: ISEND 2010 - International Symposium & Exhibition on Natural Dyes, La Rochelle, France <http://www.isend2011.com>

26-29 April: 11th Nordic TAG, session *Textile and Theory*, Kalmar, Sweden

<http://lnu.se/om-lnu/konferenser/nordic-tag-2011-/textile-and-theory>

5-7 May: Conference *Basketry and Beyond: Constructing Cultures*, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK <http://www.uea.ac.uk/art/events-news/events/basketryandbeyond>

9-13 May: 11th NESAT, Esslingen, Germany <http://www.nesat.org>

16-19 June: 12th International Conference on Oriental carpets (ICOC), Stockholm, Sweden <http://www.icoc-orientalrugs.org/index.shtml>

8 September: The Archaeological Leather Group, *Why leather?*, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, London, UK. <http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/>

14-18 September: 17th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, Oslo, Norway <http://www.eaa2011.no>

7-9 October: *Textiles from the Nile Valley*, Antwerp, Belgium <http://www.dressid.eu/calendar/conference-textiles-nile-valley-antwerp>