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Margrethe Hald: the life and work of a textile pioneer

A new research project was launched at the Centre for Textile Research (CTR), University of Copenhagen on 1 September 2020 with the generous support from Stiftelsen Agnes Geijers Fond för Nordisk Textilforskning.

The project deals with the life and work of the famous Danish textile researcher Margrethe Hald. Her pioneering research represented a rare virtuosity by combining various academic fields such as archaeology, ethnology, art history and cultural history with textile craftsmanship - a combination that continues to inspire textile researchers today. This project continues CTR's 2019 work on the Margrethe Hald Archive, when it was digitised and made accessible to the public, and a research group was formed at the beginning of 2020. During the process of digitising the archive, it became clear that a large amount of hitherto unresearched and unpublished material was archived at the National Museum of Denmark and in the National Archives in Copenhagen.

The research group will work for one year preparing a study of Margrethe Hald's work. The project will revisit Hald's considerable output, her immense private and professional correspondence in the Danish National Archive and the National Museum of Denmark, travel logs and photographs in order to revitalise and create new understandings of her groundbreaking research. Margrethe Hald understood that textile research could not be limited to just one particular scientific approach. Her study travels to other geographical areas, especially south and Mesoamerica and the Middle East, were of vital importance for the development of her academic knowledge. The digitisation of the approximately 600 slides from the archive spotlighted the fact that most of the

slides lack information on either place or date. However, using the newly discovered material from the Danish National Archive, CTR will attempt to pair letters, passport stamps etc to individual slides to make it possible to publish these appropriately in connection with the other records. In doing so, it will be possible to understand exactly what



Fig. 1: Margarete Hald, passport issued 16th September 1958 in Copenhagen (Image: Hald Archive CTR)



Margrethe Hald learned during her travels and how this influenced the results of her research. So far, the archival studies show that Margrethe Hald had an unusual talent for cultural historical dissemination to both academics and the public. Her work included both technical analyses of archaeological textiles and reconstructions of ancient dress and costume. Her retirement from her position at the National Museum of Denmark in 1967 was marked with the major exhibition *Ancient looms*, which was also shown at the Moesgaard Museum in Aarhus. In many ways, this exhibition was innovative in the field of dissemination in Danish museums. As a part of the project, CTR will highlight Margrethe Hald's hitherto unrecognised impact on dissemination through museums. The overall goal of the project is to update Margrethe Hald as one of the pioneers of textile research, whose work represented a virtuoso interdisciplinarity that continues to define textile research today, and to present her groundbreaking research to a new generation of textile researchers.

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Fig. 2: Margarete Hald, Cultural Identity Card of the Council of Europe, executed before 1955, when it became renewed to 1957 (Image: Hald Archive CTR)