

# Else Østergård

## 1940-2018

Textile conservator Else Østergård died on 21 March 2018 at the age of 78. Through her many years at the National Museum of Denmark, Else was always promoting the importance of textile research in the museum and was an eager advocate for general knowledge about textile history.

Else started as an apprentice in textile conservation at the museum in 1958 at only 18 years of age. She ended her employment when she turned 70 in 2010 but continued to work with her research projects until her health failed. At her debut, the department of conservation was small with only a handful of employees. Else was active in establishing the School of Conservation in Copenhagen in 1973, where she taught textile conservation during its early years. Throughout the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, museums in Denmark were favoured with funding from the state. The National Museum benefited from this and a large conservation department was established. Else and her colleague Sonja Støvring shared the responsibility of leading the textile conservation workshop until the end of the 1990s, when a major restructuring resulted in a merger between textile conservation and paper, skin and leather conservation.

Else was helpful and encouraging to everybody but could also be passionate and impulsive. She had a strong personality and her presence in the textile workshop did not go unnoticed.

Margrethe Hald's research on Danish Early Bronze Age and Iron Age textiles was a great inspiration to Else, and, in many ways, she became her successor at the museum. Else was innovative, lively and constantly thinking of ideas for research projects and topics for exhibitions with textiles being the key to them all. Her main passion was the history and technology of medieval textiles. She published much of her research



and was a keen lecturer in demand in Denmark and abroad. Over many years, her research focused on textiles from the Norse settlements in Greenland. This resulted in the publication *Woven into the Earth* in 2003. In 2011, she published an addenda, *Medieval garments reconstructed. Norse clothing patterns* in collaboration with Lilli Fransen and Anna Nørgård. Both books

were eagerly received by the public. The pattern book has become a much needed aid in the growing public interest in reconstructing medieval garments.

Through her hard work, Else also built a large network both nationally and internationally. She was a member of the Centre International d'Étude Textiles Anciens (CIETA) and an eager participant in the North European Symposium for Archaeological Textiles (NESAT) meetings from the very beginning. Else took a great interest in young scholars and colleagues, serving as a mentor as well as helping them in practical ways by sending work such as dye and fibre analyses or the production of reconstructions their

way. She made sure that the rich Danish collections of prehistoric and medieval textiles were kept safe and that they were examined according to the newest standards. She followed the establishment of the Centre for Textile Research at the University of Copenhagen with great interest, in particular the development of new scientific analytical methods that allowed for better dye and fibre identification, for improved dating of textiles, and for establishing their provenance.

Else was a kind and welcoming person as well as an acknowledged scholar, and she will be remembered with fondness.

Irene Skals and  
Lise Bender Jørgensen