



## **Friends of Textiles and Costume**

Spring 2026

### **Message from the Chair**

Dear Friends of Textiles and Costume,

April showers bring May flowers is for me, an expression of the anticipation of good things to come at this time of year. It reminds me of chintz fabrics and their endless variations of designs of flowers, especially longed for at this time of the year – of fritillaries, peonies, carnations, roses and hydrangeas. One of the good things to anticipate is this newsletter! Since our editor, Jane Liu has stepped in to the position, it's something that I look forward to in the Spring and Autumn. I'm very grateful and thankful for her hard work that goes into producing this.

This current edition will bring you up to date on some of the happenings within the department and museum. Also, be sure to read the article on the conservation of a samurai's suit of armour that's currently on display in the "Shokkan" exhibition, which also includes historic traditional Japanese costumes and a contemporary Issey Miyake creation. Be sure to catch the "Shokkan: Material Encounters in Japanese Art" exhibition on the third floor of the Heritage wing. And there's an article related to ROM's Chinese rank badges, penned by Sarah 's intern, plus a ROM hat story, and more.

Another good thing to look forward to in the coming months. We have an exciting field trip planned for Wednesday, May 27 at 1:00pm. This will be a visit to the storage facility of the City of Toronto's Museums and Heritage Services to see chosen highlights of their historic costume collection. More details on this to come and I will send out an invite to FTC members.

Wishing you a happy start to Spring with more good things and good reading!

Philip Cheong, Chair of Friends of Textiles & Costume

## **In This Issue**

This edition highlights objects from ROM's Global Fashion & Textiles collection featured in the current exhibition "Shokkan: Material Encounters in Japanese Art", along with a range of engaging articles:

1. Conservation of a Red Samurai Suit of Armour — Anne Marie Guchardi
2. Three Stunning Dresses — Jane Liu
3. Barbara Klunder — Gary Cassidy
4. A ROM Hat Story — Deirdre Macdonald
5. A Close Look at Two Ming Dynasty Rank Badges — Iris Zhai
6. Piña Fabric — In Conversation with Tess Aviado

## **Conservation of a Red Samurai Suit of Armour**

Anne Marie Guchardi, ROM textiles conservator

### **Introduction**

The exhibition "Shokkan: Material Encounters in Japanese Art" features several textile objects including kimono, contemporary Japanese fashion, and a suit of Samurai armour.

More commonly considered in studies of the history of arms and warfare, this unique ensemble is first and foremost a type of dress.

Samurai armour is a study in contrasts: soft and strong, protective and decorative.

The components may include:

- Steel and/or leather plates (lacquered)
- Leather trim or cord
- Fabrics: silk, hemp or cotton
- Silk cord
- Brass or gold-plated steel fittings



Figure 1: Red lacquer armour early 18<sup>th</sup> century  
L2001.18.279.2 © ROM.

This suit of red lacquer armour dates from 18<sup>th</sup> century Japan, during the Edo period. The Edo period, approximately 1600 – 1867 was a period of relative peace in Japan. As a result, members of the Samurai class were rarely involved in active combat and suits of armour became a kind of court dress worn for ceremonial occasions. This armour was collected in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century and donated to Victoria College at the University of Toronto. It has been in the care of ROM since 1912.

## Construction

The textile components of the armour are both decorative and structural.



Figure 2: Detail of the lacquered metal plates  
L2001.18.279.2 © Anne Marie Guchardi.

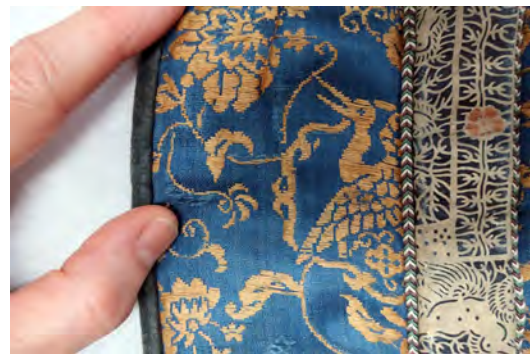


Figure 3 Detail of gold coloured silk brocade with  
hemp fabric lining L2001.18.279.2 © Anne Marie  
Guchardi.

The lacquered metal plates (Figure 2) which form the chest armour are laced together by a series of cords known as odoshi 緘. Odoshi are composed of fine silk threads which are braided together on specialized looms. The lacing patterns of the odoshi create structure as well as beautiful designs.

The base of the armoured sleeves, shoulder, and thigh guards is composed of a blue and gold coloured silk brocade with a hemp fabric lining (Figure 3). A small pocket of silk brocade is riveted to the front of the chest armour.

The fabric is additionally trimmed with a smoke tanned doe skin in a fine stencilled design and outlined by a narrow silk braid.

## Conservation Treatment

Treatment was required to stabilize the textile components prior to exhibition. The silk brocade and braided cord components were very weak with some tears and losses. Previous exposure to prolonged intense light and heat has caused drying and fading of fibres and the heavy weight of metal components puts great strain on weakened fabrics.

Threads of fragile silk fabric were aligned and secured with fine silk thread and covered with a layer of nylon net and stitched in place. This allows good visibility while reducing the chance of abrasion and fibre loss.

Weak and detached lengths of silk braid (odoshi) were secured by stitching to sheer polyester ribbon which was then threaded through original holes in the lacquered plates.

Synthetic adhesive was used to secure the ribbon at the beginning and end of the lacing like starch-based glues used in the original construction.



Figure 4: Detail of damaged silk after treatment with net overlay © Anne Marie Guchardi.



Figure 5: Odoshi cord after treatment © Anne Marie Guchardi.

## Mounting

As the armour is a specialized type of body covering, the component parts must be displayed so they make sense while also supporting weak areas.

A metal armature to support the lacquered plates and take the weight off the fragile silk braid was constructed by ROM preparators working with textile conservation.

Rare earth magnets embedded in the arms, thighs and shoulders of the mount provide further support.



Figure 6: Thigh guard fitted on mount © Anne Marie Guchardi.



Figure 7: Sleeve guard fitted on mount © Anne Marie Guchardi.

## Three Stunning Dresses

Jane Liu, FTC Executive

From ROM's collection of Global Fashion & Textiles, three stunning dresses are now on display in the featured exhibition Shokkan: Material Encounters in Japanese Art.

The first dress (Figure 8,9) is a woman's outer robe (uchikake) with Three Friends of Winter "pine, bamboo, and plum" art motif. This is from the Edo period in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is Silk rinzu damask with shibori resist-dyeing and embroidery, padded with cotton wadding.



Figure 8: Woman outer robe uchikake © ROM.



Figure 9: Detail of the uchikake in figure 10 showing embroidery © ROM.

The second dress (Figure 10 and Figure 11) is a woman's summer kimono with design of the full moon and autumn grasses. This is from the Shōwa period, 1929. It is painted gauze, painted and resist dyed.



Figure 10: Woman summer kimono 962,67.26 © ROM.



Figure 11: Detail of resist-dyed full moon and autumn grasses © ROM.

The third dress is an Issey Miyake (1938-2022), seen in Figure 12 and Figure 13 with dress and trousers. It is from the Heisei period, 1990, made from polyester and linen.



Figure 12: A close up of the dress 990.62.1.1-2 © ROM.



Figure 13: The dress laid flat © ROM.

## Barbara Klunder

Gary Cassidy, DMV Docent and Co-chair of Gallery Interpreters

Throughout her life, Barbara Klunder has been a creative dynamo, working in a variety of media, from designing print fonts to promotional posters to mosaics to T-shirts to illustrations to knitted textiles to hooked rugs and more!

Born in Toronto in 1948, she grew up in an artistic household. She attended Ontario College of Art from 1965 to 1966. By the tender age of 17, she was doing illustrations for The Globe and Mail and continued as a freelance illustrator and designer. African art has been a major influence on Barbara's work over the years.

At the age of 28 she started designing hand-knit sweaters, launching them in New York with the help of Vogue Magazine. Several of her sweaters and other textiles are in the ROM collection. Both the sweaters and her subsequent rug designs showcased her skills as an illustrator and designer as she discovered the possibilities of textile and fibre.



Figure 14: Sweater titled "Night on the Town" 1984, Barbara Klunder 2022.35.8 © ROM.



Figure 15: Hooked rug titled "Laura Secord Rug" 1989, Barbara Klunder 2022.35.1 © ROM.

People who lived in Toronto in the 1980s and 1990s and who were familiar with the Queen Street West area may remember a nightclub and restaurant called the “Bamboo Club”, which opened in 1983 and closed in 2002. It was known as a casual place to gather with good food and good live music. It had a tropical vibe and décor. This writer remembers the “Bamboo” fondly as much of his misspent youth was in fact spent at the “Bamboo”.

Barbara helped define the club’s visual identity. She was at the core of the BamBoo’s marketing, from creating its logo to illustrating ads, menus, posters, T-shirts, giant murals and mosaics, monthly newsletters (over 200 issues in total), and much more. She continued her association with the “Bamboo” for almost 20 years.

She participated in a show in 1991 at the Textile Museum of Canada of fourteen very large hand-hooked rugs from makers around the world. Gradually her interests grew into making conceptual pieces that had commentary built into them. 27 Downsized Purses was a collection of small purses made from a variety of materials from nature such as birchbark, pinecones, and wood, with embroidery, knitting, and rug hooking. This eventually became a solo show at the Canadian Craft Museum in 1996.



Figure 16: Toronto Downtown Jazz Festival  
Woman’s T-shirt 2011 Barbara Klunder 2022.35.21  
© ROM.



Figure 17: Toronto Downtown Jazz Festival  
Poster © Barbara Klunder.

Music is a recurring theme in her graphic work over the years, having done the posters for both Vancouver and Toronto Jazz Festivals for twelve years, among other musical event posters. She also designed a souvenir T-shirt for the Rolling Stones’ tour promoting their 1994 “Voodoo Lounge” album.

Barbara has designed a few print fonts which were commercially successful.

In 2018, Barbara moved to Hamilton as her Toronto Island house had sustained water damage. She moved back once the house had been renovated. Leaving her Toronto Island home, today, Barbara lives in downtown Toronto.

She has been teaching Drawing and Painting at the Art Gallery of Ontario for the past few years and is asked annually to lecture at many Art colleges and Craft Guilds in the Toronto region. She is also asked to be on many juries, from National Magazine Awards to contemporary Art competitions.

## A ROM Hat Story

Deirdre Macdonald has adapted this article from her biography of Lily Jamon: “*Her Hat in the Ring: Toronto Milliner El Jamon and Her Circle*”(September 2025)

A “fantastically architectonic hat” created by Lily Jamon (1918-2009), known professionally as El Jamon, marks a moment Toronto design broke with tradition and made a bold leap forward. Known as the “City Hall Hat” this hat takes pride of place in ROM’s El Jamon collection of twenty-seven hats.



Figure 18: Toronto City Hall © City of Toronto.

On September 13, 1965, with great fanfare, Toronto’s newly built City Hall, designed by the Finnish architect Viljo Revell, opened for the first time with 14,000 Torontonians in attendance. The City Hall’s design, with four main areas that include Nathan Phillips Square, the Podium, Council Chamber, and the Towers, received international acclaim and launched Toronto into the modern era.

El Jamon’s iconic “City Hall Hat,” inspired by the two concave towers framing the Council Chamber, was designed for Jamon’s friend and long-time client Frances Marion Boorer (1911-1993), an interior designer, who wore it to the opening. Boorer’s hats were donated in 1994 to ROM by her son Brian Purdy, president of Media Image Communications Group.

Art consultant Jeanne Parkin, wife of architect John C. Parkin, whose firm, John B. Parkin Associates collaborated with Revell on the New City Hall, also wore an El Jamon hat to the opening. Parkin says of Jamon: “[She] had a real modernist style with a strong sense

of form. I went to her for fifteen years because her sculptural designs were simple and direct—never about feathers, flowers or lace, but how they fit on your head” (See “Hats Off to City Hall,” by Dr. Rachel Gotlieb, *The Globe and Mail*, November 15, 2003, M4). The story goes that when Maire Revell arrived in Toronto to represent her husband Viljo, who had died shortly before the opening, Parkin loaned Revella fascinator by El Jamon.

The “City Hall Hat,” made of grey felt, fits closely to the head and curves down over the ears. The front view frames the face. Viewed from the side, the hat echoes the architectural sweep of the City Hall’s two towers and reveals a hint of its rich, gold-coloured felt lining. The back of the hat flares opens in a deep “V” to reveal the lining, hemmed by a narrow band of grey felt and secured at the bottom of the “V” with two gold-coloured felt bows.



Figure 19: Woman’s hat El Jamon designed by Elena “Lily” 1960-1969 994.210.22 © Deidre Macdonald.



Figure 20: El Jamon City Hall hat 994.210.22 © ROM.

The hat would later be displayed at ROM in the 2003 exhibition “*Felt Feeling: From Home to Handbag*.” Writing in *The Globe and Mail*, author and then Gardiner Museum curator Dr. Rachel Gotlieb, notes there’s a long tradition of wearing great architecture. She cites the 1931 Fête Moderne Ball, held in Astor Hall, where New York City architects dressed as their skyscrapers.

Karyn Ruiz of Toronto’s Lilliput Hats, one of Toronto’s best-loved contemporary milliners, seconds Gotlieb’s observation. For the AGO’s 2008 party to celebrate the opening of Frank Gehry’s renovation, Ruiz designed and made a hat for Rosamond Ivey—Chair of the Ivey Foundation and AGO Board member—that replicated in miniature the elegant spiral staircase Gehry had added to Walker Court. She needed approval from Gehry to proceed with the hat. The finished “Gehry Staircase Hat” by Ruiz, made of thin Douglas Fir veneer, mounted on a wearable base, with a high-density foam core, includes tiny visitors to the gallery: a mother and her child, a businessman with his briefcase, and a group of tourists. Ivey’s husband, John MacFarlane, sported a vintage top hat silk

screened with an image of Grange House, the first home of the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). As the new AGO and the old AGO they won first prize.

Jamon never garnered prizes for her artistry. The presence of her work, however, in collections at ROM, at Montreal's McCord Museum, at Kingston's Agnes Etherington Art Centre, at Winnipeg's Costume Museum of Canada, at Toronto's Museums and Heritage Services, and at the Fashion History Museum (Stratford) testifies to the valued role she's played in the history of Canadian fashion. The hats Jamon made (designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch) as the first milliner hired by Canada's Stratford Festival, where she worked for more than a decade, are documented in photographs and in portraits by artist Grant Kenneth Macdonald of the actors in many Festival productions. Today descendants of Jamon's clients treasure their El Jamon hats and wear them with pride, testament to Jamon's timeless sense of style and to the power of a hat to bond one generation with the next.

"*Her Hat in the Ring*" is available through the Toronto Public Library and for purchase through the independent bookstores listed on [Deirdre Macdonald website](#).

## A closer Look at Two Ming Dynasty Rank Badges

Iris Zhai, Lin-Chen family internship, Indian Ocean

During the approximately 550-year rule of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties, animal motifs on court robes were markers of the wearers' duties and privileges in the government. Civil officials wore birds, military officials wore beasts, and each would be further delineated with nine variants, symbolizing nine ranks of employment. Here is a close look at two official's rank badges from ROM collection:



Figure 21: 978.244.1.A © Iris Zhai.



Figure 22: 978.244.1.B © Iris Zhai.

Figure 21 and Figure 22 are two dark blue silk damask yardages of identical designs. On the background are lozenge-shaped clouds termed sihe ruyi yun 四合如意雲 (literally, 'four ruyi-shaped clouds'), and in the centre, a stylized animal is featured on the square badge, a typical element of Ming official's chang-fu 常服 ('semiformal robe'), most commonly worn during office duty.

To an untrained eye, the stylizations make the animals not easily distinguishable one from the other. The crane badge for an official the 1st rank (Figure 23), for example, shares features with the egret of 6th rank (Figure 24). The mythical beast depicted on Figure 21 & 22, with its dragon-like head and scaled body, is reminiscent of a Qi'lin, one of the highest status symbols of 1st rank military officials and often of aristocratic men.



Figure 23: A Ming 1<sup>st</sup> rank civil official crane, 950.100.124.A-C © ROM.



Figure 24: A Ming 6<sup>th</sup> rank civil official's egret badge, 950.100.290 © ROM.

According to John Vollmer "Reading the Signs at Court: Imperial Textiles in the Chris Hall Collection," in *Power Dressing: Textiles for Rulers and Priests from the Chris Hall Collection*, eds. Hwei Lian Wong and Szan Tan (Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, 2006), 54. the mythical beast Qi'lin 麒麟 is often mistranslated by Western scholars into "unicorn," a phenomenon which, interestingly, happens in reverse on Figure 21 & 22 database records. In response to the frequent confusion of Qi'lin with the lion and the Xiezhi 獬豸 in archaeological records of Ming rank badges, a paper published in 2022 provides analysis of the coded depictions of the three animals:

The Qi'lin turns its head backwards, has two horns, its front left leg kneels, and its front right leg props the body up. Its body is covered in scales, and it has cloven hooves.

The lion turns its head to the side, sits on the ground propped up by the front legs. Its mane is curly, its body not scaled and it has paws with sharp claws.

The Xiezhi is a mythical beast that lifts its head and gazes, has one horn, sits on the ground propped up by its front legs. Its mane is straight and flips up. Scales are often observed around its legs, and its feet are paws with sharp claws.

Therefore, the animal on Figure 21 & 22 – gazing up, single horn, raised mane, no scales except on the legs, paws for feet – is in fact a Xiezhi rather than a Qi'lin. While a Qi'lin insignia suggests the wearer's noble (aristocratic, princely) status, the Xiezhi is also "outside" of the nine-rank employment system of Ming and adorned – indiscriminate of rank – semiformal robes of all censors, usually employed at the central government's censor, the 'Chief Surveillance Office' at various levels.

## **Piña fabric – In conversation with Tess Aviado**

Jane Liu, FTC Executive and Tess Aviado, FTC Member



Figure 25: Piña fabric 28" x 45" © Tess Aviado.

Jane L: How did you acquire that piña fabric? Do you know where it was made?

Tess A: It was given to me by my sister in Manila. The fabric was sourced and woven in the province of Aklan, in the central Philippines, where vast pineapple plantations are cultivated for their fine fibers.

Jane L: Could you briefly explain how piña fabric is made?

Tess A: Traditionally, each strand of pineapple fiber is painstakingly extracted by hand and then scraped to remove impurities. The fibers are carefully knotted, wound, and woven on traditional looms—a process that can take several days to produce just a few meters of fabric. With the rising demand for sustainable and organic textiles, some

weavers now combine traditional handwork with modern techniques to increase efficiency while preserving craftsmanship.

Jane L: Your piña fabric is an elegant off-white. Can piña fabric be dyed in other colours?

Tess A: Yes, it can. Piña fabric readily absorbs natural vegetable dyes in a range of colours. Because the pineapples are cultivated without pesticides or chemical treatments, the fibers retain their purity and respond beautifully to natural dyes.

Jane L: How can we tell if piña fabric is made entirely from pineapple fiber or blended with other materials?

Tess A: Pure piña silk has a natural gloss and high lustre that isn't artificially enhanced. It feels soft and fine to the touch and is hand-washable—no dry cleaning required. These qualities reflect the organic nature of the fibers and the care taken in their production.

Jane L: Piña fabric is sometimes called “piña-silk.” Does that mean it's blended with silk?

Tess A: It can be. Piña fibers blend harmoniously with silk, cotton, and even abaca (known as Manila hemp), producing fabrics with different textures and finishes while maintaining their signature elegance.

Jane L: Your piña pieces are beautifully embroidered. What embroidery technique was used?

Tess A: The embroidery is done using a traditional technique called calado, a Spanish term meaning “openwork.” This intricate method creates delicate, decorative holes that give the fabric its characteristic lightness and refinement.

Jane L: The embroidery on your piña pieces looks quite different from that on Barong Tagalog shirts. Why is that?

Tess A: My pieces are hand-embroidered using cotton or pineapple silk threads, resulting in a softer, more intricate texture. In contrast, most commercially available Barongs today are machine-embroidered on blended fabrics. Discerning wearers often prefer pure piña Barongs with hand embroidery for their authenticity and craftsmanship.

Jane L: Finally, where can readers find authentic piña fabric?

Tess A: For genuine piña fabric, I recommend sourcing directly from Aklan, a province in the Visayas where most traditional weavers are based. Authentic pieces are also available through select merchants in Manila. [Tesoros Philippine Handicrafts](#), for instance, remains one of the country's leading retailers of traditional Philippine textiles.

## Please consider joining our committee!

Visit our webpage: [Friends of Textiles & Costume](#).

### **Friends of Textiles & Costume**

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Contact FTC: [ftc@rom.on.ca](mailto:ftc@rom.on.ca)

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**Friends of Textiles & Costume** is organized by ROM's Department of Museum Volunteers to provide support for the Museum. ROM is an agency of the Government of Ontario.

The logo for the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), consisting of the letters 'ROM' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.