



Bryn Mawr College Special Collections

Peruvian Textiles
and Collections
Management

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COLLECTIONS
LEARNING
LAB

The Collections and Their History

The collections began with the college; built through college purchases and faculty and alumni donations.

Objects were donated directly to the academic departments, the collections were managed and cared for by the faculty, housed in their offices.

In 1985 these varied collections were officially brought together under the care of Special Collections.

Bryn Mawr's art and artifact collection has over 50,000 objects.



Archival photograph of the Deanery, furniture is in the college collections.

I'm sure we're all familiar with Bryn Mawr's Special Collections, either through working there, class visits, or happening across an exhibition in the Rare Book Room. Special Collections manages the College's collections of rare books and manuscripts, art and artifacts, and the college archives.

The collections themselves began with the college, built through college purchases and faculty and alumni donations. When the collections started, objects were donated directly to the academic departments (for example the Greek vase collection belonged to the Classics department, fine arts to the History of Art department, and so on). Professors collected materials they used for teaching, and the collections were managed and cared for by the faculty, housed in their offices. It was not until 1985 that these varied collections were officially brought together under the care of Special Collections (with some exceptions, notably the rock and mineral collections still looked after by the geology department in Park, though in name fall under Special Collections).

Bryn Mawr's art and artifact collection has over fifty thousand objects, covering a wide range of material from across times and geographies, with hundreds more being donated each year.

A University Collection

Mission, Activities, and Roles

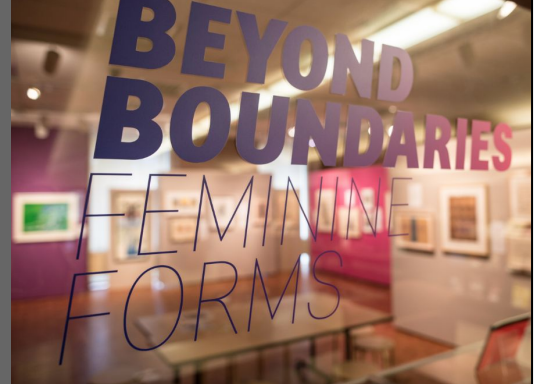
“promote engagement with the collections through exhibitions, classroom instruction, research project support, internships, and public programs.”



Photograph of students (me on the left!) doing course work in Special Collections



Installation photos of Special Collections Exhibitions



Special Collections is at its core a teaching collection, and as such much of its activities revolve around this educational purpose. The department’s central mission is to “promote engagement with the collections through exhibitions, classroom instruction, research project support, internships, and public programs.” As a part of a college, Special Collections serves to support the wider educational mission of Bryn Mawr, enhancing teaching and learning across disciplines.

Hundreds of objects from the collection are used each year by faculty, students, and outside scholars. The collections often form a foundational aspect of many courses, allowing for students to gain a deeper understanding of an object beyond the confines of an image in a book, as well as building skills in object handling and collections management. Additionally, Special Collections facilitates several exhibitions a year, held primarily in the Rare Book Room in Canaday, as well as other locations across campus. These exhibitions often serve as an educational site, providing both undergraduate and graduate students hands on experience in the process of exhibition curation.

As a part of this educational mission, Special Collections is also deeply engaged in creating and expanding digital access to the collections. As with most other institutions, Special Collections dedicates much time to ensuring the online catalogue is updated and as accurate as possible to assist students, faculty, and researchers in looking through the collection and locating objects.

Praxis Work on Peruvian Textile Collection

The Objects

Research on 11 textiles from the Ward and Mariam Canaday Collection



My Praxis project this semester was to work on a group of Peruvian textiles, a vast collection on which little work has been done. My work combined many aspects, centering on deepening our knowledge on these understudied objects.

The college's collection of Peruvian material, numbering over 700 objects, mostly pottery and textiles, was donated in the 1960s by Ward M. Canaday and Mariam Coffin Canaday, Class of 1906. The circumstances surrounding how this material came into the hands of the Canadays is deeply unclear. Though much archival research has been done, information on when or where this material was acquired by the family has not been found. There is some evidence that the family travelled to Peru, though based on the state of the material (textiles were cut into neat rectangles) it is assumed that they were collected from an art dealer, not necessarily in Peru. This poses a number of challenges when conducting research on the objects; without archeological data on their excavation, the identification of a culture group or geographical location of production is further complicated.

Out of this group of objects, I selected 11 textiles to focus my semester's research on. In the fall I was in a topics course focusing on Peruvian textiles, so I went into this semester with some knowledge on how to look at, research, and understand these objects.

(Pictured, from left to right: *Chancay Textile Fragment (Discontinuous Warp and Weft) with Manta Ray Imagery*, Chancay, Late Intermediate Period, camelid fiber. Bryn Mawr College 2000.3.166.; *Discontinuous Warp and Weft Textile Fragment with Geometric Design*, cotton fiber. BMC 2000.3.171.; *Chimú Discontinuous Warp and Weft Textile Fragment with Bird Imagery*, Late intermediate Period, cotton fiber. BMC 2000.3.76.; *Nasca (?) Textile Fragment with Geometric Step Pattern in Discontinuous Warp and Weft*, Middle Horizon, cotton fiber. BMC 2000.3.140.)



Microscope images of textile structure

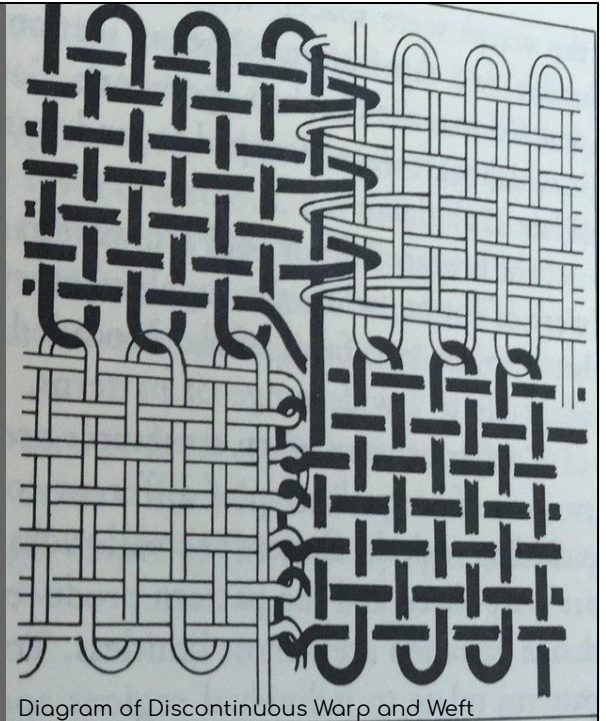


Diagram of Discontinuous Warp and Weft

I based my grouping on technique, choosing to study textiles in our collection made with the complex and unique technique 'discontinuous warp and weft'. This means that neither the warp (the threads that are typically held in tension by the loom) or the weft (the transverse threads woven through the warp) pass all the way from edge to edge. They instead cross only their own color area and turn back on themselves when meeting another color. As the main support structure does not span the entire textile on the loom, it is an incredibly complex technique, and is for the most part only found within pre-hispanic Andean cultures.



a non-invasive technique of object analysis that can be used on many different types of material for many different purposes.

The images are produced using a modified camera with filters that cut off the light above or below a certain boundary.

In textiles can be used to indicate the presence of indigo dye

Multiband Imaging

A large part of my work with these textiles was to explore their make up and document the objects. One really fascinating aspect of this was multiband imaging. This is a non-invasive technique of object analysis that can be used on many different types of material for many different purposes. This is a relatively new process within the field, and quite new at Bryn Mawr; we began getting the equipment required for it about a year ago, and only had everything we needed this semester, which meant we were very much learning on the job right alongside our supervisor. For our purpose, we used this type of imaging to identify the use of indigo dye in the textiles. The images are produced using a modified camera with filters that cut off the light above or below a certain boundary.

(Pictured, from left to right: *Discontinuous Warp and Weft Textile Fragment with Geometric Design*, camelid fiber. BMC 2000.3.164., Visible light and MBRIS image; *Discontinuous Warp and Weft Textile Fragment with Geometric Design*, Late Intermediate Period-Late Horizon, cotton fiber. BMC 2000.3.163., Visible light and IRRFC image)

Testing for Indigo



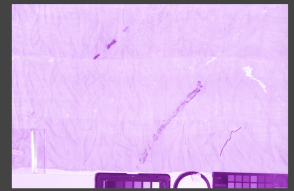
Shot with BP735 filter



Shot with BP660 filter



Shot with visible light filter



Shot with IRR XNite830 filter



Multiband Reflectance Image Subtraction

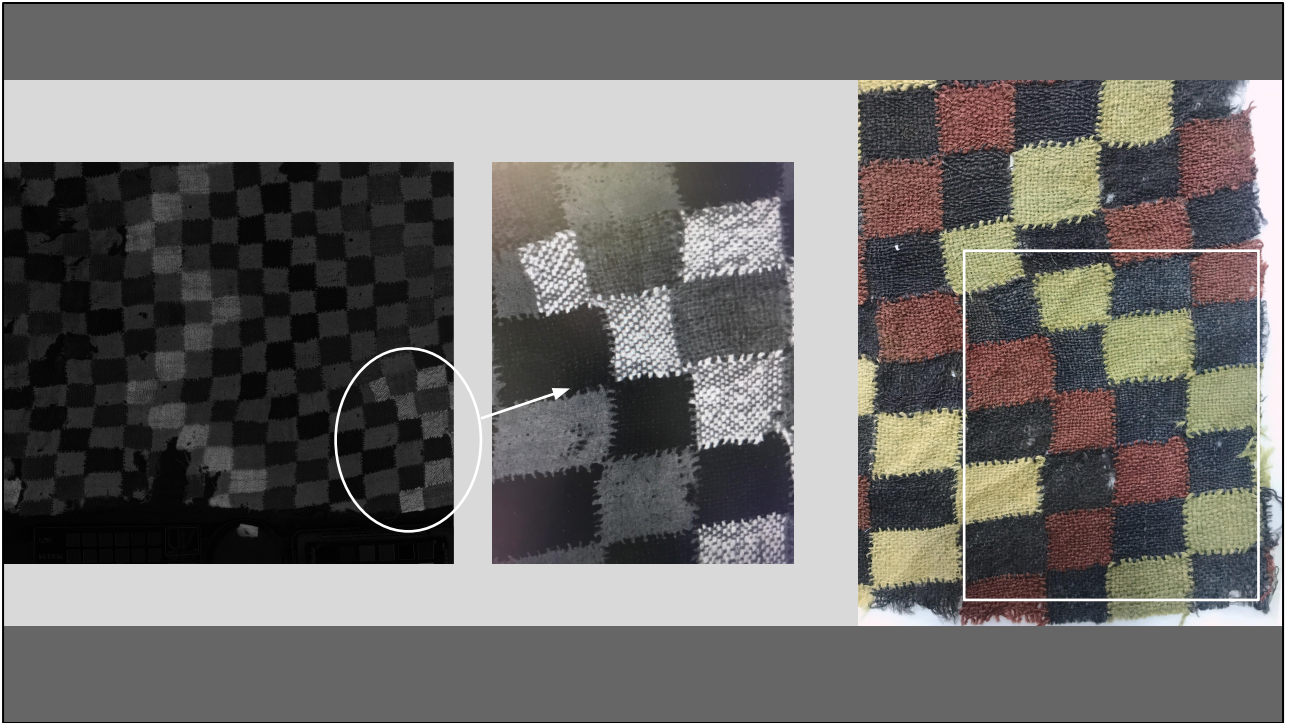


Infrared Reflected False Color Image

Particular dyes respond to different light energies in unique ways. Indigo has a strong absorbance around 660 nanometers and a high reflectance just under 800 nanometers.

In the editing process, for the Infrared Reflected False Color Image, you take the two images and “copy and paste” different color channels into each other to see only the certain lightwave lengths. If indigo is present, the area will appear red. For the Multiband Reflectance Image Subtraction, the two images are converted to black and white, combined, and one subtracted from the other. In this image indigo will fluoresce white.

(Pictured: *Textile Fragment with Striped Design*, cotton fiber. BMC 2000.3.139.)



In addition to locating the presence of specific dyes, for one of my objects this process revealed something fascinating and unexpected about its physical composition. A section of the textile that we were not expecting to have indigo fluoresced in a pattern that indicated a change in threads (not based on the pattern of the textile). This is almost imperceptible to the naked eye, particularly if you aren't looking for it.


(Pictured: *Discontinuous Warp and Weft Fragment with Zigzag Stepped Design*, camelid fiber. 2000.3.167. MBRIS image close up and visible light close up)



I was interested in taking a closer look at this, so I put the textile under the microscope. You can very clearly see the difference between the warp and the weft, and where it changes. this could be the result of a different dye batch, and could possibly help in confirming its relationship to other similar textiles if they are ever to be located.

SEARCH THE COLLECTION MENU

YOU TOYS EXPLORE THE COLLECTION RANDOM



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FRAGMENT (PERU) 1100-1400

Click the icon to save this object

This is a **Fragment**. It is dated 1100-1400 and we acquired it in 1943. Its medium is **wool**, **cotton** and its technique is plain weave with discontinuous and interlocked warps and wefts. It is a part of the **Textiles Department** department.


Andean cloth has many meanings. Some are expressed through complex iconographic representations, others employ a strictly geometric vocabulary. Another form of meaning comes from the materiality of the cloth itself and way it was made.

See more objects with the tag **status, clothing, natural color, interlocking, mantle, stepped pattern, duality, wool.**

See more objects with the color **sienna, darkolivegreen, rosybrown, silver** or see **all the colors** for this object.

2019 2020

Research and Cataloging



unknown Nazca

Bowl with Geometric Step Design


100 BCE - 750 CE
Clay
2 9/16 in. x 6 5/16 in. x 6 5/16 in. (6.5 cm x 16 cm x 16.03 cm)
Gift of Ward M. Canaday and Mariam Coffin Canaday, Class of 1906

Bryn Mawr College
69.1.314

TriArte
Art and Artifacts Database

Object Results record 1 of 1

View: text list image & label Object Full View and Image Annotation description



unknown Peruvian

Nasca (?) Textile Fragment with Geometric Step Pattern in Discontinuous Warp and Weft

Middle Horizon
600 - 1000
Cotton fiber
19 11/16 x 12 13/16 x 1/16 in. (50 x 32.5 x 0.2 cm)
Gift of Ward M. Canaday and Mariam Coffin Canaday, Class of 1906

Bryn Mawr College
2000.3.140

Geography: South America, Peru, Andes (Coast)
Classification: Unclassifiable Artifacts; Artifact Remnants; Cloth Fragments
Collection: Ward M. Canaday Collection

This imaging is part of the larger project of object research, with the goal of updating and expanding catalogue entries for this group, a key part of collections management. This included research on technique, culture group, and imagery to solidify dating and identification for objects. Another key aspect of this is comparanda research, which serves to further this identification of objects based on similarities with objects in other collections and how their scholars have identified them.

All of this is to the end of making the collection more accessible to faculty, students, and researchers.



The end :)