



# Textile Research Centre, Leiden

## Newsletter, Summer 2013

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### Summer holidays

It has been a busy few months and during the month of July the TRC is shutting its doors for a well earned rest! We will open again on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August. But we could not miss the opportunity to tell you about some amazing pieces we have just acquired in Cairo, Egypt, for the TRC collection. But first:

### Five-day Intensive Textile Course

Between 14-18 October 2013, the TRC is running its popular five-day intensive course on textiles (this is the seventh time the course is given !). The course is a mixture of theoretical and practical elements, with an emphasis on trying out the various techniques of textile production (spinning, dyeing, weaving), on holding and examining fibres, textiles and finished items, all in order to learn and understand what is happening and why various combinations take place. The aim is to make textiles less 'frightening' and allow people to look at a textile, from virtually any historical period or culture, and be able to understand it. For registration or more information, please see the TRC website.

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### Street of the Tentmakers, Cairo

Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, director TRC

In mid-June, thanks to the *Nederlands-Vlaams Instituut in Cairo* (NVIC), I had the chance to go to Cairo for a few days. This was officially to give a lecture at NVIC about Coptic period embroidery



and to help at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. However, the opportunity to go the 'Street of the Tentmakers' in the *Khan al-Khalili* (the historic bazaar of Cairo), could not be missed. The street is famous for the appliqué panels. These were originally made for decorating the insides of tents (hence the name of the street), but for about 100 years the craftsmen have also been making wall panels in a wide range of designs and colours that are suitable for use inside the home.

With the help of two British friends, John and Joan Fisher, I spent a most enjoyable and interesting afternoon in the Street talking with the men who make and sell the appliqué panels. Inevitably, we bought a small selection of them. It has since been agreed that NVIC will mount an exhibition about the Street in Cairo, and especially about these panels, in November 2013.

In addition, the TRC in Leiden will hold an exhibition of these and other panels, plus information about the history of the street, photographs of the modern craftsmen, and perhaps even have demonstrations by two Cairene craftsmen on how to make and stitch the panels. This will be in about 18 months time as more information, examples and photographs need to be collected.

To give a taste of the range of colours and designs associated with the Street, we are adding some extra pages to this newsletter to show you some of the panels the TRC has just purchased.



*Arabic calligraphy panels play an important role in the repertoire of the Street. These illustrations show just three of the many forms.*



*Typical Islamic design in the Street colours of red, green and black.*



*A stunning 'lotus' design panel using shiny material, which gives these panels a gem-like effect – this material is more difficult to work than the traditional cottons.*



*Two 'lotus' panels, the left hand one is worked by women, while the right hand one is by male craftsmen. Each of these two panels is over 2 m square in size!*

If you would like to support this project please let us know, we are going to need about €10,000 to enable two workmen to come from Cairo for a week, produce a booklet, plus purchase more examples - these panels will be used to make both an amazing exhibition that will be available for other museums and institutes, while practically helping the craftsmen and women in these difficult days. The exhibition will, of course, be available for loan to suitable venues.

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## ***Current Exhibition: BEYOND THE CHADOR: Dress from the mountains and deserts of Iran***

Until 29 August 2013, the TRC is presenting a spectacular exhibition of clothing from Iran in its Leiden gallery. Visitors are struck by the sheer diversity, the bright colours and multitude of shapes, which constitute such a marked contrast with the dominant perception of Iranian clothing as being dull and uniform.

*TRC exhibition "Beyond the Chador".  
Photographer: Andrew Thompson.*

Iran is a country with a very ancient and proud history. It is also a country with a harsh climate, with deserts and mountains and an overall lack of water. Formerly known as Persia, it lies at the crossroads between Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Iran is



also the homeland of many empires, including the Persian Achaemenids, the Parthians, the

Sassanians and the Safavids. Over the centuries numerous groups crossed the country, in both directions. Some of the newcomers settled down, others moved on. Nowadays Iran shares frontiers with (clockwise) Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The country's geography, climate and human history have thus created a complex tapestry that reflects a wide diversity of cultures and traditions. Although rapidly vanishing in some areas due to national pressures and globalization, many aspects of these traditions can still be found in the regional dress of the country, especially that worn by women.

Most of the outfits in the exhibition date from the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries and are now housed in the collection of the Textile Research Centre, Leiden. Many of the garments were collected during long periods of field work in Iran between 1998-2003 by Gillian and Willem Vogelsang. The garments originate from among most of the main ethnic groups, plus some smaller ones.

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## The next exhibition: *What is Embroidery?*

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September will see the opening of the TRC's next exhibition entitled *What is Embroidery?* The term embroidery is being used in its broadest 'umbrella' sense. The exhibition will include (among others) historical and modern examples of free style and counted thread forms, as well as appliqué, couching, drawn and pulled thread work, patchwork, quilting and smocking.

The first part of the exhibition will show technical details such as equipment, thread, ground cloths, and means of transferring a design. The second section will use examples of embroidery from the TRC's extensive collection, and present a wide range of forms and uses of this decorative technique from around the world. Truly a source of information and inspiration !

*Henriëtte Braunstahl, embroidery student and later teacher in c. 1903.*

The third section is about a young lady called Henriëtte Braunstahl from Den Haag (1885-1983), who was presented in 1904 with a diploma from the *Industrieschool voor Meisjes* ('s-Gravenhage) as a handwork teacher. The TRC was given her collection of exercise books, water colour albums, photographs, as well as samples of her work, by Henriëtte Braunstahl's family. The TRC embroidery exhibition is seen as **the** moment to show the embroidery skills of a girl from over 100 years ago and to illustrate the teaching methods of the time.



*If you don't know what all these embroidery terms, such as appliqué, couching, drawn and pulled thread work, patchwork, quilting and smocking, mean exactly, then come and have a look. If you do, then there will be many items on display that will surely inspire you to explore further the amazing world of embroidery!*

This exhibition is supported by the *Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds Zuid-Holland* and the *Van der Mandele Stichting*. We would like to say many thanks to both of these organisations for their continuing support of the TRC and its work.

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## TRC and the NRC

In July 2013 the *NRC* newspaper (a high-quality Dutch national newspaper) will be holding a photo shoot at the TRC as part of its preparations for their September magazine (appearing on **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September**). The guest editor for the magazine is the famous fashion designer, Haider Ackermann! There will be several pages of photographs taken by the fashion photographer Ari Versluis and stylist Ellie Uyttenbroek (see [www.exactitudes.com](http://www.exactitudes.com)), and many of the garments illustrated will be from the TRC African collection. This fashion shoot is an unusual activity for the TRC, but it is an important part of our belief that inspiration comes in many different forms!

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