

The Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship

Report by Rosie Nuttall



MPhil Textile Conservation 1st Year Placement

Artlab Australia, Adelaide

South Australia

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Introduction

1.1. General Introduction

My name is Rosie Nuttall. I am 30 years old and I come from the UK. I am currently studying towards an MPhil in Textile Conservation at the Centre for Textile Conservation, University of Glasgow. A lifelong fascination with clothing, textiles and all things creative has influenced my career choice and resulted in a real passion for historic textiles. My studies so far on the MPhil programme have enabled me to engage my personal interests, with my academic and professional ambitions. The professional placement during the summer months this year provided an extremely valuable learning experience, enabling me to enter into the second year with new skills and confidence.

Throughout the first year of the course, I developed an interest in the material aspects of different cultures and the importance, similarities and differences various cultures place on their objects of heritage and historical significance. This interest contributed to my decision to pursue a placement in a country outside the UK in the hope that I would gain an insight into how the tangible elements of a culture are conserved out with my own, and how this might inform the decisions I may need to make in my future career.

The placement between the first and second year of the course is designed to give us the opportunity to broaden our knowledge and experience within the field of conservation and expand on the practical skills obtained during the first year on the course. The students are able to choose where they would like to undertake this placement either within the UK or abroad and it is with the help of the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship that I was able to undertake my first choice of placement with Artlab in Adelaide, South Australia.

I first heard about the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship through my course tutors, who told me about it when I expressed an interest in undertaking my placement with Artlab.



Figure 1. Showing the location of Adelaide on a map of the Australian Continent.

1.2. Study Trip

I arrived in Adelaide on Thursday the 2nd June and commenced my eight-week placement at Artlab the following week, on Monday the 6th of June. During this time, I was involved in a wide range of conservation activities in addition to the practical, studio-based conservation treatments I participated in, under the guidance of principal textile conservator Kristin Phillips and textile conservator, Mary-Anne Gooden. This included an educational trip to a small town in the Australian outback called Peterborough where I was involved in an ancient Egyptian workshop at a primary school. The purpose of the visit was to communicate the needs of conservation in museums to a young audience in an area of the country in which children have limited or no access to museums and cultural centres.

This was a highly rewarding experience and it gave me the opportunity to communicate the benefits of conservation and history to a young audience. I was also encouraged to dress up for the workshop which certainly added an element of fun.

I was fortunate enough, at the end of my placement, to visit the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), in Melbourne thanks to my placement supervisor's generosity in

accommodating me into her own travel plans. This enabled me to visit the NGV galleries and meet their textile conservator who kindly took me on a guided tour of their '200 years of Australian Fashion' exhibition.

During my time in Adelaide, I also visited local exhibitions at the Art Gallery of South Australia, the South Australian Museum and the Migration Museum, all located conveniently within the same cultural district as Artlab. I also participated in off site visits with my supervisors to museum stores to undertake pest checks, exhibit rotations and de-installations of current exhibits.



Figure 2. Showing the cultural district of the public museum buildings and the University of South Australia campus.

1.3. Budget

The total cost of my trip amounted to AUD \$4,600 which equates to approximately GBP £2691, this was slightly over my initial budget. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen difficulties with my accommodation and fluctuations in the exchange rate due to the EU referendum, I ended up needing more than I had originally planned for. In order to account for this, I used money from emergency savings and a personal loan from my parents.

The Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship generously gave me £800 towards the cost of my placement trip, without which it would not have been possible. The rest of my trip was paid for through savings from working during the first year of my studies.

Textile Conservation at Artlab Australia

2.1. Introduction to Australia

Australia is the world's only island country and continent which is located in the southern hemisphere, surrounded by the Indian and Pacific oceans. With a surface area of 2,933,088sq. miles and a population of 23.8 million, the economic development is relatively sparse with a great expanse of arid desert in its centre and a population density of 8 people per square mile. The majority of the population being concentrated within the capital cities of each of Australia's six states, New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. The low density of Australia's population is largely due to the extreme topographical conditions which attract huge numbers of visitors to the continent. The centre of Australia is arid and largely unpopulated and to the west of the largest town in its centre, Alice Springs is home to the monumental environmental structure '*Uluru*', also known as "Ayers Rock" which is sacred to the *Pitjantjatjara Anangu*, the indigenous population of the local area and is one of UNESCO's world cultural heritage sites.

Australia has over 500 indigenous Aboriginal communities, each with their own languages, territories and cultural histories which makes for an extremely rich amalgamation of cultural history, completely removed from more recent additions of culture through western settlement of the continent.

Adelaide, home of Artlab and the capital of South Australia is situated on the coastline of South Australia and was founded by 'free citizens' in 1826 and named after 'Queen Adelaide', wife of William the IV. It has a population of 1.25 million people and is an English-speaking city with a Mediterranean climate, with mild and cool winters, moderate rainfall and warm, hot and dry summers where the temperature can reach over 40°C. During my stay, temperatures were around 10 – 14°C. Due to Australia's location in the southern hemisphere, the seasonal variations meant that during the British summertime, I would be arriving into

the winter months in Adelaide. Spending much of my life living in the North of England and Scotland, this was an aspect of my trip that I was very much acclimatised to. Despite it being a little cooler and wetter than I was expecting, I did get to experience some gloriously sunny, albeit a little chilly few days during my trip.

2.2. Introduction to Artlab



Figure 3. The outside view of my placement location, Artlab Australia.

Artlab Australia is the largest Conservation Centre in the Southern Hemisphere. Situated in Adelaide, South Australia, Artlab is a multi-disciplinary conservation studio responsible for the conservation of South Australia's extensive collections. It undertakes work for corporate clients, galleries and museums, libraries, other cultural institutions as well as private clients. Its main aim is to deliver "first rate conservation practices embracing national and internationally recognised codes of practice of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material ensuring cultural heritage can be enjoyed by future generations" and "to

provide a contemporary conservation service and to increase awareness in the importance of cultural heritage in our global history.”

My learning experience within the textile studio at Artlab under the guidance of principal textile conservator, Kristin Phillips and Textile Conservator Mary-Anne Gooden provided a valuable professional insight into such a unique institution. It offered the opportunity to interact with the 25 conservators of different disciplines employed at Artlab, together with curators, exhibition designers, installation teams, collections managers, museum staff and private clients. This enabled me to put into practice practical skills that I had so far gained and contributed to the development of my communication and professional skills.

Artlab itself is situated in Adelaide’s Central Business District (CBD) next to the University of South Australia and is surrounded by some of Adelaide’s main cultural institutions such as the Art Gallery of South Australia, the South Australian Museum, the Migration Museum and the State Library. This convenient locale enabled good access to the collections and exhibitions for both preventive and interventive treatments and allowed a great deal of interaction with other museum professionals such as curators, museum directors and collections managers.

2.3. Placement Objectives

The aim of my placement at Artlab was to set professional, personal and academic goals to shape what I wanted to gain from the experience. The main objectives I wanted to focus on were;

- To describe how the role of the conservator in a multi-disciplinary studio supports the conservation needs of the museum and the private client.
- To identify the daily decisions made within a conservation studio, through interventive treatments and stitching practice.
- To evaluate the implementation of carbon economy for interventive and preventive measures under differing climatic conditions to that of a UK institution.

I was exposed to and involved in a diverse range of conservation activities during my placement. However, the main areas of work throughout the placement were interventive treatments on seven different objects.

These ranged from a 19th century sampler which belonged to a private client, an ethnographic bandolier from West Papua made from 'Coix' seeds belonging to the South Australian Museum collections, a Cigar Quilt belonging to the South Australian Museum and about to go on loan to the National Gallery of Victoria and an 18th century child's silk dress from a small museum located in Burra, South Australia.

In addition to the treatment of client objects, my placement hosts helped me to integrate me into the daily running of the Textile department as part of their team. This involved being present during client meetings, fortnightly management meetings, visits to museum stores and conducting pest checks and preventive measures off-site.

2.4. Starting my Placement at Artlab

The first week of my placement began with a rainy bus journey from my accommodation into the city centre and on into the South Australian Public building sector in which Artlab is housed. Kristin began by introducing herself and her colleague Mary-Anne Gooden who I would also be working closely with. Mary-Anne had undertaken the conservation programme at the University of Melbourne, the only one offered within Australia. This was a really great opportunity to compare my learning experiences with Mary-Anne's and the course offered in Melbourne. Kristin has had a long and fascinating career in Textile Conservation and I learnt a great deal from her through discussions on previous projects which she and Mary-Anne had both worked on, such as the conservation treatment of Australia's 'Eureka' flag – a huge flag first flown during the 'Eureka Rebellion' of 1854 in Ballarat, South Australia. This was conserved in a huge project during 2010.

My first morning started with Kristin giving me a tour of the Artlab buildings and introducing me to the conservators working within each different department including book, objects, paper and paintings conservation workrooms. This was a really lovely way of meeting some of the people I would be spending the next few months working alongside. I was also introduced to some of the facilities available to use. There were even one or two people who had previously studied on the Textile Conservation programme I am currently enrolled on, during its time based at Hampton Court Palace, London. This encouraged discussions about

the programme and how it had changed over the years and the differences between working in Australia, having studied at an institution within the UK.

My daily routine usually started at 9am and would involve having a discussion with Kristin or Mary-Anne on what tasks I would be undertaking that day. During the time spent in the workroom, my main focus was on interventive conservation treatments of either client or museum objects. Kristin and Mary-Anne allowed me to work on a very independent basis and much of the projects I worked on were undertaken under my own time management whilst under their guidance and supervision. This provided me with a great opportunity to build on my confidence and decision making skills in a professional setting, something which I had not previously experienced outside the comfort of the university environment.

My day also involved having lunch and morning tea breaks in a communal lunch room where I was able to interact with the other conservators. This was a fantastic opportunity to converse with other professionals on the work they were undertaking as well as discussing the directions which conservation is taking in the UK and Australia respectively. This also facilitated my many visits to other departments to observe conservation processes in different disciplines and to often borrow equipment. Early on, I worked with one of Artlab's paper conservators on a 1920s fancy dress crown. This involved repairing a damaged component with adhesive, Paraloid B72[®] and making a storage mount for it. During my placement, I also got to meet several other students who were either undertaking voluntary work or were on work placements from the programme in Melbourne.

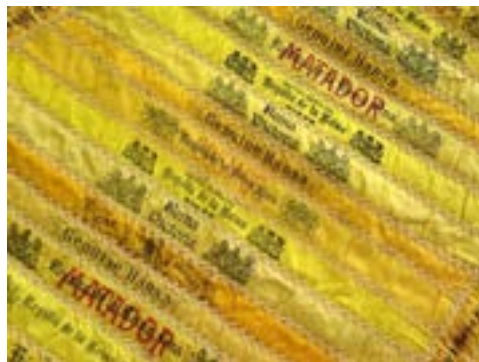
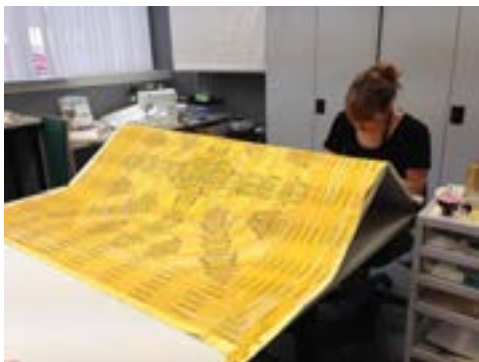


Figure 4. (left) A traditional ceremonial costume from the objects department. **Figure 5. (right)** A 1920s crown in its storage box with mount.

2.5. Conservation of a 19th Century Cigar Quilt

As a multi-disciplinary organisation, Artlab's services include the conservation of objects on loan to exhibitions outside South Australia. Because Artlab are responsible for conservation treatment of South Australia's cultural institutions, when outside establishments ask to borrow items Artlab takes responsibility to ensure they are in stable condition for the loan to be undertaken.

One of my projects involved the conservation treatment of a 1.3m x 1.4m table cover or 'quilt' made from 'cigar ribbons', this belonged to the Art Gallery of South Australia. The ribbons would have been used to wrap up bundles of cigars and also serve as an advertising tool for cigar manufacturers during the late 19th century. The ribbons were made from a variation of viscose, cotton and silk, each with a brand name and coat of arms printed in black ink. Each ribbon had been carefully hand stitched together and dated from 1887-1890, representing a unique example of an innovative and resourceful use of late 19th century material.



Figures 6, 7 & 8. Images of me undertaking a stitched support on the cigar quilt.

The quilt was requested for loan by the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne to feature as part of the exhibition 'Making the Australian Quilt 1800 - 1950.' This required the piece to undergo conservation treatment to support areas of damage and ensure it was stable enough to go on display.

Several of the silk ribbons throughout the quilt had degraded and split. This was particularly evident in the 'Cosmos' branded ribbon throughout most of the central area of the quilt. Silk is particularly susceptible to degradation when exposed to UV light and results in splitting and

fibre loss. Given the date of the quilt, it is likely that damage had occurred over time, however, it was in remarkable condition and has remained an intensely bright yellow.

I documented each of the areas of damage using photographs of the quilt with a transparent overlay to accurately record where each ribbon had split. I was then given the task of providing a net support for each of the areas of damage. This involved cutting colour matched nylon net to precisely fit the shape of the ribbons. Skala thread was then used to stitch into existing stitch holes. This would prevent further mechanical damage to the already degraded silk fibres.

During treatment, it was important to remain vigilant in taking breaks and allowing for comfortable positioning whilst undertaking fine work over a prolonged period and avoid strain on the back, neck and shoulders. The textile department use specially constructed electronically controlled, sloped tables in order to create an accessible, stable surface to minimise the stress caused to the back and shoulders. This was devised during the treatment of the 'Eureka Flag' in 2010 which required over 300 hours of stitching and has continued to be developed in collaboration with an occupational health physiotherapist and ergonomist.

In assisting in the conservation of objects for loan, Artlab plays an important role in improving access to South Australian Collections. The quilt is a rare example of late 19th century creativity and resourcefulness and I was able to visit the exhibition towards the end of my stay.



Figure 9. The quilt I had treated in the '*Making the Australian Quilt*' Exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

2.6. Treatment of a seeded bandolier from West Papua

After having expressed an interest in ethnographic textiles to my placement supervisors, I was given the chance to work on a bandolier which needed conservation treatment and a support mount for storage. A bandolier is a type of chest belt which is worn over the shoulders and around the waist, traditionally worn by men. The bandolier was part of the South Australian Museum collection and originated from the Waris area of Papua New Guinea and was made from '*Coix*' seeds threaded onto bast fibre thread.

Coix seeds are a type of seed with a naturally occurring hole making them easily threaded into small objects and garments.



Figure 10. Surface cleaning the bandolier with a low powered vacuum and soft brush.

The bandolier required extensive surface cleaning to remove dirt and dust which had accumulated through use and over its time in the museum collection. I decided that the best method of cleaning was to initially use a low powered vacuum and a soft brush to gently brush away any loose debris, followed by using a dampened cotton swab to remove more of the dirt which was visually disfiguring. Due to the beaded nature of the belt, this was quite an extensive task and took over 9 hours to complete.

Several of the bast fibres had split, leaving the beads vulnerable to loss and in order to support the beads and prevent any more being lost I used colour matched cotton thread to re-thread the numerous loose beads and secure them onto the bast fibre. This was initially a daunting task as I had never undertaken anything as interventive on an ethnographic objet before and it required the use of a fine beading needle to navigate through the very small holes of the seeds. I was quite nervous to begin with, however, after discussing the treatment with Kristin

and getting a demonstration on how the beads should be threaded and secured I was able to complete the treatment independently.



Figures 11 & 12. Cleaning of the beads with a cotton swab and experimenting with different methods of binding thread.

There were also two areas where the thread had split and needed to be supported. This involved experimenting with different types of thread to re-create a visually similar thread to the bast fibre of the bandolier. This involved unravelling several different types of cotton threads and re-binding them to get the correct thickness and twist. I was then given the chance to experiment with different types of dyeing techniques to get a good colour match for the thread. I then attached it to the areas of loss where the fibres on the bandolier had split using a hangman knot. Again, this was such fine and delicate work given the fragility of the bandolier, it was both a challenging and very rewarding task.

Once I had completed the treatment, I constructed a padded support mount for the bandolier which was to be stored in a flat wooden box for storage until its potential display. Although challenging at times, this project gave me the opportunity to work on a type of museum object which I had not previously encountered and that I had hoped to experience during my placement.

It presented a challenge of working with material objects belonging to a culture I had not previously experienced and gave me the opportunity to learn more about the culture of indigenous peoples of West Papua. This was largely enabled through communication with the South Australian Museum's curator of ethnographic objects, Barry Craig, who had a wealth of

knowledge on West Papua after having lived and worked with communities in West Papua for several years.



Figure 13. Discussing my work with the Consul General of India in Sydney who was on a state visit.

2.7. Conservation of a child's silk dress from the Burra Museum

One of the final projects I was given to work on was a 19th century child's dress which belonged to a museum in a small historic town 160km north of Adelaide called Burra. It was in Burra that the 1979 'Burra Charter' was penned. The Burra Charter is a set of principles which aims to create a nationally accepted set of guidelines for the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage in Australia. After having learnt about the Burra Charter on the 'Material Cultures' class during the first year on the MPhil at the University of Glasgow, it was quite special to be working on a dress from this historically significant place so specific to my chosen discipline of study. I was also lucky enough to visit Burra during the trip I took to the town of Peterborough with my placement supervisors to take part in an educational workshop.



Figures 14 & 15. A map of the historic town of Burra and standing at the town's pagoda en route to Peterborough.

The dress was a small boy's dress made from yellow silk with pleats, and a tunic made from silk and cotton lace. The main issue with the dress was that the gathered sleeves which were made from silk had undergone severe deterioration and had 'shattered', the term usually used to describe silk which has split along the warp threads and is usually caused by factors such as UV light and dehydration. The sleeves had a particularly complex construction and were pin tucked below the shoulders, making any interventive treatment difficult. To add to the complex construction, the silk was very weak and brittle and, when touched, would lose fibres.



Figure 16. A side view of the damage to the arms of the child's silk dress before conservation treatment.

The first challenge was to devise a suitable treatment to best suit the needs of the dress and the client. Due to the extremely fragile nature of the dress and extent of the damage, this was challenging. Some of the main concerns to consider were whether interventive treatment was the best course of action for this dress, or if preventive techniques such as storage and environmental controls would be sufficient to ensure its survival.

After much consideration and discussing the various options with Kristin, it was decided that I would conduct interventive treatment on the dress as the support and retention of the silk was considered to be important to its long-term survival.

The treatment involved humidification with an ultrasonic humidifier to allow moisture to enter the silk fibres and relax them to facilitate handling and minimize fibre loss.



Figure 17. Introducing moisture to the dress using an ultrasonic humidification unit.

I then made a pattern to match the shape of the sleeve and made a net support for the entire sleeve which would be stitched into the strongest areas around the shoulders and cuffs of the dress. This would encapsulate the sleeve to retain any fibre loss and minimise the risks of

mechanical damage through handling. The process involved making patterns and testing the shape of the sleeve as well as testing different methods of humidification.

The main consideration was for the stability of the silk during treatment and all materials and methods were first tested to ensure that the dress would remain stable. This process of trial and error proved to be one of the most beneficial learning outcomes of my placement and was particularly useful in the treatment of this dress. It was a real challenge to treat such a fragile and complex object independently and it encouraged me to trust my own judgment and try and make decisions independently.

Although Kristin and Mary-Anne were always on hand to answer any questions and advise on my treatment options, this treatment was an opportunity to use the skills I had acquired during the first few weeks of my placement and to incorporate the increasing confidence in my abilities into my developing professional practice.



Figures 17- 20. Showing aspects of the conservation treatment undertaken on the child's dress from a museum in Burra.

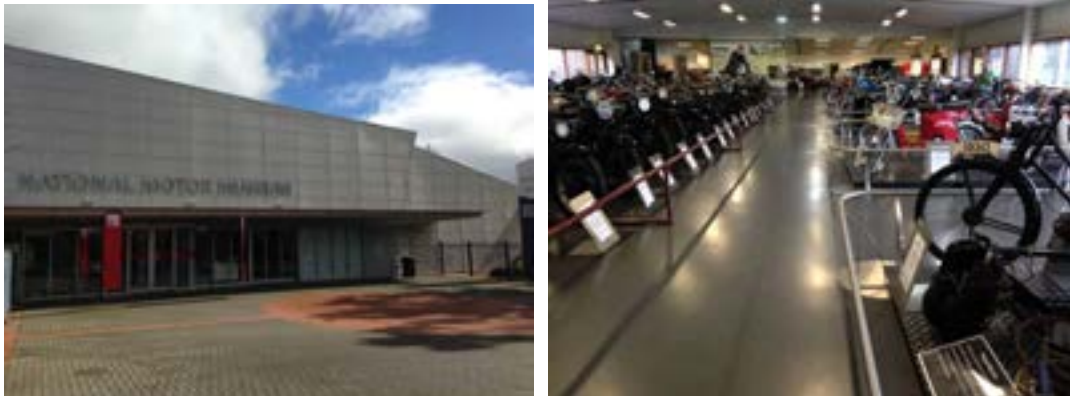


2.9. Outside the Laboratory

One of the things I really enjoyed as part of my placement was how accommodating my supervisors were in offering me the opportunity to explore other areas of conservation as well as workroom based learning. Kristin organised several opportunities for me to visit museum stores such as the main store for all of South Australia's Museum objects which was in Netley on the outskirts of the city. Here I had the opportunity to see a multitude of different objects including a wide range of Aboriginal artefacts, some of which were kept in sacred rooms, one of which was only allowed to be opened by men due to cultural beliefs. This gave me the opportunity to talk to the curators and find out a bit more about the Aboriginal collections and the level of access which originating communities have to the objects as well as issues concerning repatriation. This was something I had hoped to learn about whilst undertaking my placement in Australia and I found this visit highly informative.

I also had the opportunity to attend exhibition rotations and pest management checks at some of South Australia's external properties such as the National Motor Museum, which is the largest of its kind in Australia and is located to the east of the city in Birdwood, 54 km from Adelaide. Here I was involved in the rotation of some of the textiles on display as well as helping with routine pest checks. The National Motor Museum is home to over 300 different vehicles ranging from antiques to classic cars, motorbikes and commercial vehicles dating from 1899 to present day. Many classic cars are made from numerous textile

components such as leather and wool which have traditionally been used to make the door linings, upholstery and fittings of most vintage cars. This is an aspect of conservation which I had never considered before but discovered was extremely important in terms of preventive conservation. Wool in particular is susceptible to insect damage, especially moths. The pest monitoring involved checking previously laid moth monitors and cleaning of some of the interiors of some of the most susceptible vehicles.



Figures 21 & 22. The National Motor Museum in Birdwood, South Australia.

2.10. Exhibitions

One of my favourite things about working at Artlab was its location. I loved walking to work every morning through all of the public museum buildings and the University of Adelaide which was adjacent. Being such a multi-disciplinary institution, it meant that every day I would walk through the building to the Textile workroom on the 5th floor and pass some incredible works of art which were undergoing conservation, often for up and coming exhibitions in the adjacent Art Gallery or National Museum. This was always inspiring and it also meant that I could go and visit some of the objects I had seen being conserved by the staff at Artlab. Almost every day I walked past the painting conservation studio and there were paintings by a local Artist, Robert Hannaford, Australia's most celebrated portraitist, lined up in the corridor for a huge retrospective exhibition running from July to October at the Art Gallery of South Australia.

I was invited to a staff tour of the South Australian Museum's 'Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize' exhibition which is an annual exhibition containing finalists' pieces from Australia's premier natural science art prize, and commemorates the birth of the South Australian

Museum's first curator, Frederick George Waterhouse. In addition to this, I also visited the Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year exhibition and attended a lecture given by Michele Cloonan entitled 'Sustainable Preservation: What we can all learn from the Natural World' on the 23rd of June.



Figures 23 – 25. The Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize Entries.

At the end of my placement, on the 3th of July, Kristin very generously offered to let me join her on a trip to Melbourne where she was heading for the weekend. This enabled me to visit the National Gallery of Victoria where the cigar quilt I had treated earlier in my placement was on display in the exhibition 'Making the Australian Quilt: 1800 -1950'. I was also able to visit another exhibition '200 years of Australian Fashion', which was an astounding collection of the fashion from the 1800s to present day in Australia.

2.11. An Authentic Experience

Living in Adelaide for nine weeks was a long enough time to really get to know the city and the surrounding area. Australian people are well known for their friendly nature and all of the staff at Artlab made every effort to make me feel welcome and at home in their city, making constant recommendations for things that I might like to do. Despite it being the winter time, one of the most beautiful parts of the city centre is the Botanical Gardens located about a 10-minute walk from the cultural district where Artlab is located. I visited these several times during my weekends off.

Adelaide is also famous for its Central Market which is full of fresh, locally produced fruits, vegetables and local produce and I thoroughly enjoyed the vibrant and busy atmosphere whilst picking up much of my grocery shopping which I tried to do as locally as possible.

I managed to visit some of the local beaches including Glenelg, which is a short tram ride from the city centre and has a beautiful long stretch of white sands and local amusements. On the weekend of the 25th of June, Kristin and her husband introduced me to one of Adelaide's most popular spots, Victor Harbour. Victor Harbour is one of South Australia's most popular holiday spots and has been since the 1800s and is located 80km south of Adelaide. It overlooks a beautiful bay with turquoise waters and long sandy beaches, we took the horse-drawn tram over a short stretch of the bay to Granite Island recreation park.

While in Australia, I met some wonderful people and made several friends who were really keen to show me around their city and its surrounding areas. This gave me the opportunity to travel further into the Adelaide Hills and go for walks in the many recreation parks which surround Adelaide. One of the most exciting aspects of this was the local wildlife, I managed to see a Koala bear in the wild on a bush walk in Anstey's Hill recreation park to the north of the city centre as well as seeing huge numbers of Kangaroos roaming around the wild bush areas. This really gave me the chance to engage in the local customs of Adelaide through the people living there, by the end of my study trip I felt very much part of the city rather than an outsider. It even included a tour of Adelaide's 'Christmas in July' market which was a small winter market with everything you would usually expect to find at a festive market including an ice skating rink and mulled wine, except that it took place for the 25th of July instead of December due to the opposite seasons.



Figure 26 (left). Adelaide's 'Christmas in July Markets! **Figure 27 (right).** Adelaide's bustling central markets.

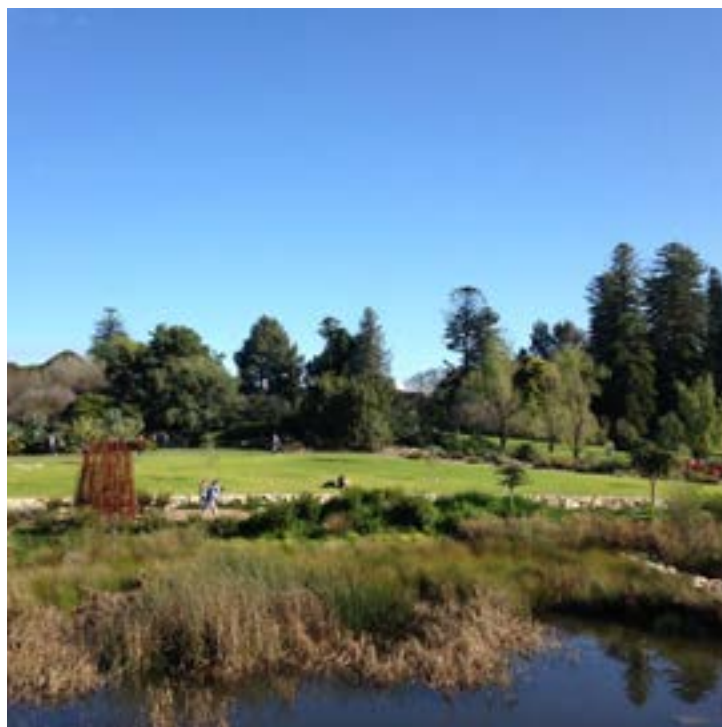


Figure 28. A view of Adelaide's botanical gardens looking beautiful.

Conclusions

After undertaking my eight-week placement at Artlab, it has become clear that the core theories of textile conservation taught on course programme have provided me with the fundamental knowledge which I was able to apply successfully in context during my placement. This facilitated an extremely valuable learning experience.

From this experience, I have gained a great deal of personal and professional confidence as a textile conservation student and emerging professional. By undertaking my placement in at Artlab in Australia it has really opened my eyes to the variety of different activities and responsibilities that working in a professional environment entails. In particular, I learned a great deal about the importance of communication when working in such a multi-disciplinary, unique environment which Artlab was able to offer, with conservators as well as other museum professionals. I learnt a great deal from my placement supervisor Kristin and Mary-Anne and gained a lot from experiencing the way in which they worked. I feel that my placement really complimented my level of experience and I received a fantastic level of support when treating both client and museum objects.

I was given every opportunity possible to enrich my experiences at Artlab and was given several opportunities to initiate aspects of conservation I wanted to understand more. I was able to spend some time with the preventive conservation team at Artlab in order to investigate how maintaining climatic conditions compare with those in the UK. This was a great opportunity to better understand the needs of collections in more a more extreme climate and the controls in place to deal with higher temperatures.

I gained a lot from understanding the way in which textile conservation works in Australia, particularly the South Australian collections and how they are managed by Artlab. Although I would have perhaps enjoyed more of an insight into the history and culture of indigenous Australia, I came to understand that the conservation and exhibition of sacred objects is often complex and therefore I was not exposed to a great deal of this material. This has really contributed to my understanding of cultural objects, their significance and sensitivity in the museum context.

There is very little that I would have changed about my placement with Artlab and I feel that it was an extremely valuable learning experience both in terms of conservation and in experiencing another culture, although similar to my own, very different in many ways!

Thanks

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship for their help towards the cost of my trip, without this support my placement with Artlab would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my tutors from my University programme at the Centre for Textile Conservation for allowing this placement to take place and for their support throughout.

Finally, I would also like to thank Kristin Phillips and Mary-Anne Gooden as well as all of the staff at Artlab Australia for making my placement so enjoyable and who went out of their way to encourage me and the needs of my placement wherever possible.



Figure 29. Saying farewell to some of the Artlab staff I had been working with over the last two months of my placement over a slice of cake.

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