SACRED TEXTILES AND THE WEAVING OF RITUALS AND MYTH

By Damasque Wells

Supervisor- Julia Lockheart

Statement:

“Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons) Surface Pattern Design & Textiles

University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea

10th December 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations……..3-4

Summary of Topic……5

Introduction…… 6-7

Chapter 1. The Sacred ……8-18

Chapter 2. Holiness ……19-22

Chapter 3. The Everyday…….23-25

Chapter 4. Who is the Maker? Who is the Receiver? What makes it Sacred? and Myth and Spirituality…… 26-37

Conclusion……..38-40

Bibliography……41-42

Additional Reading List……43-44

List of Illustrations……45-46

Word Count- 5464

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Bembo, B.(1441-47) *The Pope, fascimile of a Tarot Card from the 'Visconti' deck* [Colour lithography] Private Collection/ Bridgman Education City (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 2: Japanese Photographer (19th Century) *Making a Kimono* [photograph] Private Collection/ Bridgeman Education City? (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 3: Japanese School (19th Century) *Japanese Silk and Fabric Shop* [Hand coloured Photograph] Biblioteque des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, , France/ Charme/ Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 4: Lang, L (1857) *A Sewing Party* [*oil on canvas*] Private Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 5: Trevorrow, E , *Assorted Artworks* [Weaving] Camp Coorong/Ngarrindjeri Culture/Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority Available at: https://www.ngarrindjeri-culture.org/gallery (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 6: Rinehart, F (1899) Native *American woman and child, woman and baby of the Wichita Indian tribe* [black and white photograph] Everett Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 7: unknown (1850-1900) Japan, *Robe* [boro stitch] Victoria and Albert Museum Available at:https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/make-your-own-japanese-boro-bag (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 8: Japanese School (late 19th century) *Japanese weaving loom* [print] Private Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 9: English School (19th century) *The Paris International Exhibition, Illustration for The Illustrated London News* [engraving] Private Collection/Look and Learn/Illustrated Papers Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 10: Sakura, M & Vandestra, M (2018) *Japanese Folklore Tales of the Beautiful Weaving Maiden Bilingual Edition English and Spanish* [book] Available at: https://www.overdrive.com/media/3966556/japanese-folklore-tales-of-the-beautiful-weaving-maiden (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 11: Hillers, JK, (1843-1925) *Portrait of a 13 year old Hopi girl named Modisi sitting in front of two Navajo blankets* [albumen print] Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, UK/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 12: Piedmont, Italy, *The Shroud of Turin* [black and white photograph] SZ Photo/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 13: Raimondi, M (1927) *The Veil of Veronica, or Sudarium* [engraving] Meyers Lexicon,pub / Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 14: Bernardo, D (14th century) *Legend of the Holy Belt (predelle of Santa Cintola polyptych)* [painting, oil on wood] Museo Civico, Prato, Italy/Luisa Riccianni/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 15: Stuart, F.G.O (1897) *representatives of New Zealand in London for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria* [silver gelatin print] Private Collection/Micheal Graham-Stewart/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 16: (1955) *Front page of magazine 'Psyche' about Sigmund Freud,* Collection Bourgeron/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 17: Horikiri, T Wagoner , R (2016) *The stories clothes tell : voices of working-class* Japan [Textiles] Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 18: Horikiri, T Wagoner , R (2016) *The stories clothes tell : voices of working-class* Japan [Textiles] Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 19: Beato, F (1868) *Japanese Yakonin in Dress of Ceremony* [albumen print, hand tinted) Private Collection/Christies Images/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 20: Gordon, J. (2010) *'Maritime Influences on Traditional Knitwear Design: The Case of the Fisherman's Gansey: An Object Study', Textile history* (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 21: Wells, D (2021) *My own stitch exploration* [photos of my textiles] (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 22: Cas Holmes-Themes & Techniques [blog] Available at:https://theartyteacher.com/cas-holmes-themes-techniques/ (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 23: Goldsmith, S (2021) *Locust of the Dress* [textiles] Thread Exhibition/ Elysium Gallery/Swansea UK/Available at: https://www.elysiumgallery.com/events/event/thread/ (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 24: *Mulberry* [engraving] Private Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 25: Japanese School Basho-fu with kasun (19th century) *Okinawan Kimono,* Seattle Art Museum, Seattle USA/ Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Summary of Topic:

Sacred Textiles and the Weaving of Rituals and Myth explores narratives connected to the ‘Sacred’, ‘The Everyday’ and ‘The Maker’ corresponding to fabrics and how these topics create a mindfulness formula enabling the reader to understand the spiritual notion of the mundane and ordinary and how the simplest things regulate a life of importance and meaning.

Introduction

My Independent Research Project will be an exploration of information connected to the topic 'Sacred Textiles and the Weaving of Rituals and Myth particularly topics aligned to 'The Sacred', 'Holiness' , 'The Everyday' and the 'The Maker'. For me as a practitioner of Surface Pattern and Textile these topics have a great deal of importance for me. I have learnt to appreciate life's precious moments and realised that finding my own zen within committing myself to a creative everyday task has allowed for a peaceful stability to reside within. It is a reminder that being at one with perhaps one stitch created in time, moves your own personal journey forward even though minute and simple and the smaller things equate to much bigger things and assist every step of the way. Currently I am undertaking a major practical component researching elements connected to culture and slow stitch and experimenting with my own designs using processes such as embroidery, drawing, digital, fabric collage, felting and several other techniques combined to produce work for our current Rolls Royce Brief.

I have used a variety of secondary sources for undertaking research including books, journals, academic papers, magazines and the internet. Primary research undertaken was attaneding the 'Threads' Symposium and workshop at Elysium Gallery in Swansea and exploring the 'Indigo' Exhibition at Glynn Vivianne Gallery in Swansea.

I found that attending the 'Threads' Symposium' and workshop was extremely useful. It gave me a launching pad into the topic direction.

Chapter 1 discusses the word `sacred` its meaning and mysteries and what makes them ‘sacred’. The topic also explores the receivership of these sacred textiles and the creators of these divine fabrics. Moreover, Chapter 2 examines the subject ‘Holiness’ and researches historical sacred cloth and its spiritual prowess and how textiles over time have been worshipped spiritually throughout cultures past and present. Furthermore, Chapter 3 analyses the ‘Everyday’ in a textile context is both something we attend to whether its our own dress, mending of a garment or the creation of a sewn dress. Its humble nature is oftentimes overlooked and is considered to be void of meaning . Finally, Chapter 4 the maker and receiver align to their own myths and spirituality depending upon their cultural ancestry and belief systems and life experiences. This chapter examines textiles and their relationship that these two ideas bring together to deliver.

Chapter 1 -The Sacred

The word 'Sacred' is taken from the Greek word 'Hieros' meaning 'Sacred' or 'Holy'. 'Hiero or 'Sacred''. 'Hiero' is also found in the word Hierophant' which means 'expounder of mysteries' . (Stevenson, 2010) *A 'Hierophant' is a spiritual leader a priest or a priestess.* (Hoad, 1996) 'a hierophant is basically one who reveals sacred knowledge of the divine'(Lundskow, 2008).

Fig.1 The Pope, fascimile of a Tarot Card from the 'Visconti' deck

Amongst cultures the word 'Sacred' is interpreted in numerous contexts. According to the article (Scott, 2020) on 'The Construction of the Sacred' Scott refers to Bergers sociological account of religion explaining that *the sacred is* "a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in

certain objects of experience” and goes onto say that the "sacred is apprehended as ‘sticking out’ from the normal routines of everyday life, as something extraordinary and potentially dangerous power residing in ‘objects of experience’ is ‘mysterious’ to a certain extent” (Scott, 2020). The article goes on to discuss differing cultural metaphors and narratives on the subject and argues that there are different levels of perception in regards to Sacredness, Holiness and the Everyday (Scott, 2020*).* In connection to this article Roland Barthes*,* whose great Brecht-inspired *Mythologies* (1957), translated as *Mythologies* (1972) continues to set the standard for perceiving the extraordinary in the ordinary *(*Buchanan, 2018*).*

The contrasting elements of the ‘Everyday’ and ‘Sacredness’ reveal a construction of personal narratives that each and everyone of us constructs our own perspective. What one person believes to be sacred in the everyday another person would share an altered opinion. For me Sacredness of the everyday is found in simple things, as an example mending a piece of clothing and being present in the moment, through hand sewing a piece of embroidery or turning something of the everyday into a work of art. To be in union and at one with an action, an object and a place brings about a sanctuary of oneness, connectedness and a meditative experience.

Fig. 2 Making a Kimono

The word ‘Sacred’ has a nuanced set of meanings which will be explored to decipher the correct terminology associated with my chosen topic ‘Sacred Textiles’. the focus is directed towards Japanese culture, their rituals, belief systems, symbolic motifs, myths and the creative way these elements are intertwined within their Textile Art and Craft.

In the context of sacred ‘Textiles’, materials intertwine and mesh together an array of personal mystery. Through birth to death, the lived experience is conveyed through cultures all over the world. Textiles and their differing techniques bring together people, communities, memory, narrative and ritual.

Fig. 3 Japanese Silk and Fabric Shop

As a child I remember going to my grandmother's farm where she would hold sewing weekends with my great aunts and close family friends. The banter and comedy that was expressed during the making process and the productivity of unique textile creations was ever changing. Sometimes, they would not complete their intentions because the stories told were a cacophony of past histories and prominent experiences in the White Australian Culture.

Fig. 4 A Sewing Party

In connection to my sewing weekend at Nana's farm story the thesis '*Lakun Ngarrindjeri thunggari'* (Gale, 2012) talks about how the Ngarrindjeri People from the Lower Lakes and Coorong of Australia grew up telling stories of how the Elders would sit and Yarn, whilst weaving baskets from the rushes. When I say 'Yarning' I mean telling stories, and in the process educating and gifting the young ones with their Ngarrindjeri heritage and discussing topics such as culture, language, life in general including what snakes to look out for whilst washing your clothes in the lake and collecting rushes for the woven baskets and fishing nets.

Fig. 5 Ellen Trevorrow, Assorted Artworks, Ngarrindjeri Weaving

In many cases Sacred Textiles and the Everyday in my life are represented by that of my nana who upon my birth gifted me a knitted baby blanket and pair of booties. Although very simple and very much a representation of the everyday is a significant handmade offering that one holds throughout their life, a memory and a textile object that I carry with me even to this day. As a society a majority of us have a sacred textile of some description

in our life. Everyday normal people construct Sacred Objects and the very essence of that making process and the outcome of that construction is a representation of ‘An Offering’, ‘A Special Gift’ just like how the other cultures give offerings to their Gods and Goddesses.

Fig. 6 Native American woman and child of the Wichita Tribe

In the book ‘Bora Bora’ (Hodges, 1997) The Author stresses that *hardships bring out character in even inanimate objects. There is a subtle beauty in things falling apart with age. A threadbare heirloom you just can't throw away. The Japanese and their Bora Bora fabrics have a mysterious emotional warmth that tugs at heartstrings.*

Robe, unknown, 1850 – 1900, Japan. Museum no. FE.27-2015. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Fig. 7: Japan, Robe

Who receives Sacred Textiles? Who makes them? Who/what makes them Sacred?

In the book *'Fabric of Myth'* (Anon, 2008, p.11) the Anonymous author discusses the fact that a piece of fabric is a visual code similar to that of written language. It broadcasts intelligence about the creativity of a civilization. For centuries the power of 'fabric' has supported empires not just in strong cultural pursuits but also economically. The metaphorical notion of 'weaving' represents a narrative plot, connected to the world particularly the society to which it belongs.

Fig. 8: Japanese weaving loom

The ‘Maker’, like the silkworm, intuitively formulates a construction of emotive threads channeling their inner Holiness of lifecycles, a subconscious mind map enabling the receiver to continue the journey of warp and weft that cross over and converge timelines of past, present and future. These phases *exhibit “a three-stage process of birth, "death" within the cocoon and "rebirth" as a moth. This presents itself as powerful metaphor for the acquisition of eternal life’* (Como, 2009, p.9). The god of immortality appears in a form that *"in every way resembles a silkworm’* (Como, 2009 p.10). Metamorphosis creates the cycle of life which links specific moments in time.

Fig. 9: The Paris International Exhibition, Illustration for The Illustrated London News

Como (2009 p.10) states this correlation between the silkworm and immortality as a universal motif. Literature of the Japanese Nara period further supports this mutual relationship. Kuwa Hime who was not of this world but a ‘Mulberry Maiden’ or more specifically a ‘Weaving Maiden’ acting as an immortal is believed to of transformed herself into a mulberry branch floating in a mountain stream in Yoshino. Thinking she was in disguise her magic garment that allowed her to fly between heaven and earth was discovered and she was forced to marry a human male and eventually returned to

Heaven. This poetic fable communicates the lament over lost love through the motif of the ‘Weaving Maiden’.

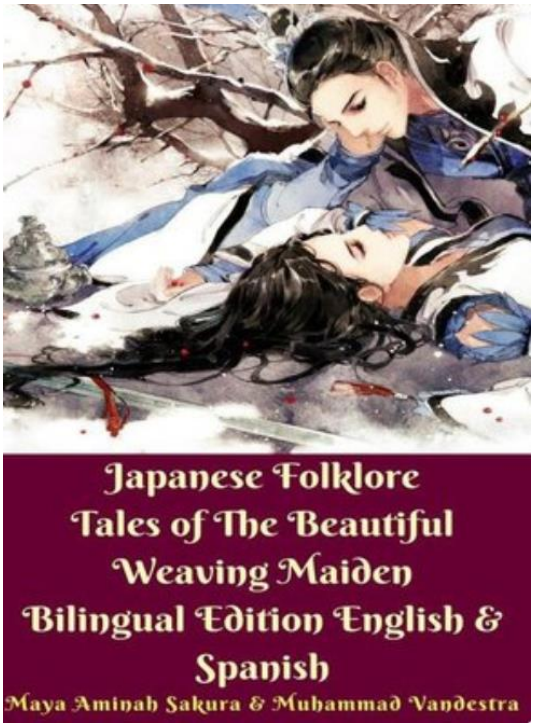

Fig. 10: Japanese Folklore Tales of the Beautiful Weaving Maiden Bilingual Edition English and Spanish

Like the ‘Hierophant’ and ‘The Expounder of Mysteries’, textiles whether it be an Obi sash of a kimono, a Native American woven blanket strip or a Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal basket, “when gathered together these artifacts embody a universal narrative of humanity’s sacred and secular practices and beliefs” (Anon, 2008, p.11). These religious connections establish a discourse surrounding cloth and ritual and “the regenerative and degenerative processes of life, binding humans not only to each other but to the ancestors of their past

and their progeny of their future” (Weiner & Schneider, 1991, p. 3) which further establishes the cycle of life.

Fig. 11: *Portrait of a 13 year old Hopi girl named Modisi sitting in front of two Navajo blankets*

From the book ‘Cloth and Human Experience’ (Weiner & Schneider, 1991, p. 52) Textiles that have been passed down from generation to generation carry with them hazards and casualties of time. The integration of lifetimes and history invoke value, creating an archival treasure, intertwining past and present.

Chapter 2

Holiness

According to Nickell, (2007, p.13–25) a relic left by a supposed holy person after death connects the idea that a person's virtue, holiness or protective healing powers do not die with the individual but stay within the object. This force is contained although animated and continues long after passing. Throughout history holiness and objects has been linked to textiles in numerous cultures around the world. For centuries people believed that after the crucifixion Christ's body was wrapped in a cloth and imprinted on the fabric was the actual face and body of Jesus. An alluring physical link connected to the crucifixion, The Shroud of Turin is one of these such items and its mysterious and supernatural qualities is said to contain Christ's crucified face. This is considered to be the body vapours of Jesus, which have interacted with spices on the cloth. There are many analogies and speculations associated to the 'Shroud of Turin' but what it does formulate is that Holiness and Textiles have been commonplace throughout history.

Fig. 12: The Shroud of Turin

Akin to the ‘Shroud of Turin’ in the 13th century the Crusaders played a pivotal role in the delivery of holy objects from the treasury of the Levant, the Levant is the Eastern Mediterranean or the historical region of Syria to the Byzantium to the west.‘ The Veil of Veronica’ is another holy cloth that was considered to of had inherent and potent material qualities possessing the power of the divine presence. The Veronica was believed to have been “the sudarium of Christ, the cloth into which he pressed his most holy face before his Passion, when his sweat ran in drops of blood to the earth” (Lester, 2018) Furthermore holy objects have been considered to hold not only supernatural powers but miraculous healing qualities linked to divine.

Fig. 13: The Veil of Veronica, or Sudarium

According to Carroll (2017) Orthodox Christians considered the Holy Cincture or Holy Belt the 'Agia Zone' as another object of worship. Local history suggested that the belt was made from camel hair and said to be woven by the Virgin Mary who is known as the God Bearer. Apparently after wearing this belt her whole life, this sacred heirloom is said have been the purveyor of many miracles including helping women to conceive children.

Fig. 14: Legend of the Holy Belt (predelle of Santa Cintola polyptych)

In cultures all over the world textiles have been at the forefront of ceremonial activities such as births, deaths and marriages. They have been acquired for payment of land and throughout cultural discourses have been integrated into offerings of peace treaties.

In the paper *Maori Weaving: The Intertwining of Spirit, Action and Metaphor* (Mac Aulay & Te Waru-Rewiri, 1996, p. 3), Maori culture woven cloaks are considered reliquaries. Although not primary objects of devotion they are considered containers for the relics of time and regarded as cultural survivors which enable aesthetic decision making for past use and former contexts. The spirit of the cloak empowers the history of the weaving source formulating the idea of the treasured possession or 'Taonga' as sacred.

Fig. 15: representatives of New Zealand in London for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria

Chapter 3

The Everyday

According to the 'Psychopathology of Everyday Life', Sigmund Freud suggests that there is a advantageous tension between the conscious and unconscious, the thought and the unthought, the intended and unintended which continues to structure thinking about the everyday in all its guises. The everyday is simultaneously that which we attend to and that which we ignore or overlook

(Buchanan, 2018).

Fig. 16: Front page of magazine 'Psyche' about Sigmund Freud

The everyday and sacredness is a complex metaphor. Monks in their Monastic dress attire were considered angels of the everyday yet human. Their drab dress although

authoritative was humble and holy. As supported by Krawiec (2009) who suggests that the outer dress was meant to reflect an inner reflection of the simple, a paradox between transcendent perfection and material imperfection.

A similarity to the attire of monks throughout history, The Okinawan people of Japan perceive textiles, dress and the everyday as a reflection of Buddhism. As Yanagi Soetsu an Okinawan man who lay in bed from illness described in through his Buddhist Teachings particularly textiles as 'The Pure Land of Beauty' whereby the creation of this craft by simple means and by a humble people creates a miraculous world where ugliness becomes impossible. The Okinawan people find that the interception between beauty and moderation vanishes. An example of this is an Indigo Dye called Kasuri used in Japanese weaving that was used by the upper and middle classes from the mid19th century until the turn of the century and due to the nature of this ordinary cotton cloth did not upset the public through their affluence. Although cheap it was remarkably beautiful. Having an unpretentious nature foreigners saw its innate natural beauty and its authenticity as Yanagi Soetsu describes(1976). Channeling other interpretations of Textiles, Yanagi describes a metaphorical version of Buddhism and the link between weaving.

> *If a man lives a life of free-minded- ness, then whatever he makes will avoid ugliness. Therefore, as long as a man can remain in a state where his free mind is not obstructed, no matter who he is, or what he makes, he cannot help creating something of beauty. In this sense in all things of beauty may be found effortlessness and natural- ness*

(Sōetsu, 1976, p.19).

As Hirasawa and Lomi discuss (Hirasawa, Lomi, 2018, p.217) when objects manoeuvre from insignificant surroundings into sacred frameworks they engage in an interrelated chain of objects. Humans and deities create a social intercourse and a hereafter for the objects in which their situation may alternate between normal and divine realms, while retaining prior associations affirming reciprocal exclusivity between the concept of the 'everyday' and the 'sacred'. It is therefore, considered that if spiritual objects are detached from the ordinary then for the ordinary to become extraordinary and extraterrestrial then its regular use must have gone through a rebirth and departed from its commonplace narrative.

In the book *'Cloth and Human Experience'* (Weiner, Schneider, 1991 p. 377-407), the most informative early source on the use of textiles throughout Japan was that of the 'Manyoshu'. The first anthology of Japanese verse was rich in allusions to details of everyday life. The Manyoshu poems of early Japan mentioned various kinds of fabric and textiles including chords, ropes and bedding. Smooth fabric was finely woven and was made soft and lustrous by the use of a wooden mallet that was used to agitate the mulberry fibres. This was specifically used for sacred garments and offerings and was considered part of the Shinto alter or anywhere a sacred act was occurring.

One particular Manyoshu poem was about a woman who worshipped the gods while holding the thread in one hand and the woven cloth in the other. This representation of her with the thread indicates her pure state as she performs a ritual connected to nature; just as the goddess to Rasu wove garments for all the gods so each woman wove to clothe their family.

Chapter 4

Who is the Maker?

Sir Charles Bell suggests that

> “the human hand has the consummation of all perfection as an instrument. This, we perceive, consists in its power, which is a combination of strength with variety and extent of motion; we see it in the forms, relations and sensibility of the fingers and thumb; in the provisions for holding, pulling, spinning, weaving and constructing; properties which are found in other animals, but which are combined to form this more perfect instrument”

(Ingold, 2010, p.113).

The body is thus a vessel and a tool for making of artefacts and connects the mind, body and soul to produce work and puts the artist in the present moment and the everyday of life.

In the book ‘Making’ by Tim Ingold as suggested the hand is considered the perfect instrument and holds and delivers a power like no other. To join with the material and

becoming at one with your materials is an act of surrender and an internal zen that is required on a daily basis. The mundane routines of ordinary life can offer this experience as the very act of making is one of the most important accomplishments.

This is exemplified by the women in Japan whereby the history of hand sewing and the recycling of old materials was a normal practice. In the book '*The Stories Clothes Tell'* (Horikiri, Wagoner, 2016, Ch. 6) It focusses on female roles and how women would honourably sew and mend clothing for the family.

Photo 6.1. *Okiboda*, fisherman's coat. This particular *okiboda* was still in use during World War II. The garment type continued in use a short while after the war. Like most other work clothes, this specimen is heavily patched and mended.

Fig.17: The stories clothes tell : voices of working-class Japan

In Southern Kyushu the 'Okiboda' was a fisherman's coat which had its own unique characteristics and design. Being made from thick material and with the nuances of not

having much money, usually a family couldn't afford to have multiple 'Okibodas' so the fisherman of the family would have to use it day after day during winter although soaking wet. These winter focused Fishermans jackets were tirelessly mended and stitched ever so beautifully with Sashiko stitches. Being a humble garment , women were not too fussed with the look of the jacket but rather how many 'Okibodas' a wife could create for her husband. She took pride knowing that her husband was a lucky man because he had more than one to wear. Being crafting them from old worn-out pieces of Kimono. The 'Okiboda' was considered high value because people who could not afford to buy new materials, valued the reuse of old recyclable textiles used in the creation of high-class Kimonos. The 'Okiboda' was visual timeline or a colourful map for the fisherman who carried this unique costume throughout their everyday, translating and showcasing a lifetime of experiences upon their shoulders.

Photo 6.2. *Okiboda* (or *donza*) from northern Japan. Cotton *sashiko okiboda* (or *donza*), Taishō period, from Hokuriku. The five distinct *sashiko* stiches covering the entire body create picturesque beauty.

Fig.18: The stories clothes tell : voices of working-class Japan

Fig. 19: Japanese Yakonin in Dress of Ceremony

Furthermore, the 'Okiboda' of Japan is akin to the historical garment of the United Kingdom, 'The Gansey' of Scottish and Cornish descent. According to Gordon, (2010 pp. 99–108) the origin of the 'Gansey is heavily debated and is thought to or perhaps originate from the early 15th Century in the Channel Islands. In the latter it is identified to of been a large part of the Scottish and Cornish Sea Faring Identity. 'The Gansey' from early 19th Century to 20th Century although for practical use also had distinct patterns related to myth and folklore. Similarly, to the Okiboda, fisherman generally only owned one Gansey and this was usually knitted by a female family member. The traditional Gansey died out in the 1930's but up until this point the patterns were not usually documented. This unofficial waterproof uniform of the fisherman was worn with pride and individual knitted

patterns belonged to families or localities that had ‘their’ own recognisable exclusive designs passed down via oral legacy. Having a distinct image and story these garments and the ‘Makers’ were able to express their own individuality within the ‘Gansey’. There was a great deal of scope especially where patternmaking and design was concerned.

The oil wool used to produce ganseys had to be knitted tightly so that it would retain its colour and shape due to the wear and tear of the harsh marine environment, including exposure to the sun and washing over time. This bespoke costume the ‘Gansey’ came with its own unique ‘Marine Myth’ whereby it was suggested that if a fisherman was swept overboard then the ‘Gansey’ was used as a tool to work out the fisherman’s identity combining his unique initials and pattern into the jumper.

FIG. 1. The Gardner brothers of Cellardyke in Aberdeen, with Martin Gardner at the top left; undated. Donated by his granddaughter, Mrs Nuttall.
Scottish Fisheries Museum.

Fig. 20: Maritime Influences on Traditional Knitwear Design: The Case of the Fisherman’s Gansey: An Object Study’

The strength of these outfits is echoed in the book *Resilient Stitch* (Wellesley-Smith 2021, p7-17), whereby the author discusses the mindful and contemplative approach to textile art. Using slow stitch as a process within my independent research project creates the opportunity to explore this area fully and for the practical component connected to the Rolls-Royce brief.

From a practical perspective and using a variety of concepts connected to slow stitch, mindfulness and the cultural journey, my work investigates these topics within 'the everyday'.

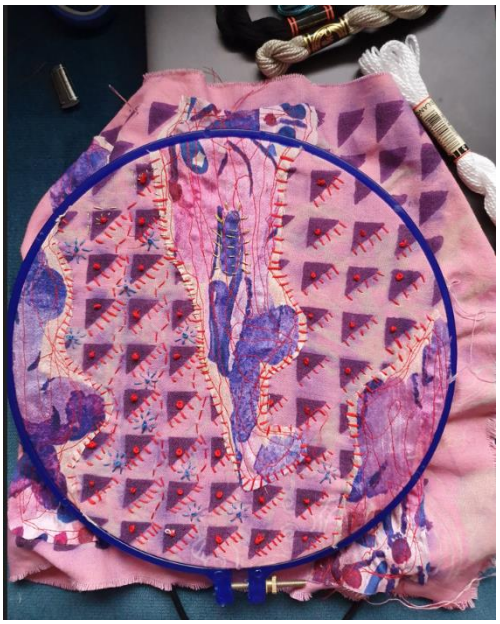

Fig. 21: Damsque Wells, My own stitch exploration

With reference to the book *Resilient Stitch* (2021) the author Claire Wellesley Smith has worked on numerous community projects connected to arts and health that specialise in slow craft and the connection to the community culture or the heritage of a place and

the impact this has on resilience. Undertaking a community project in Bradford, Northern England called *Worn Stories, Material and Memory 1880 to 2015*, the author worked with recycled fabrics, and these were used historically through industrial and domestic use. Wellesley - Smith examined samples of materials that were worn out by age left in the sunlight causing fragility, brittleness and became frayed and broken down with age and use. The author then used textiles and techniques to reinforce the fabrics. Furthermore, she also undertook a residency at Gawthorpe Textiles Collection in Lancashire and came across a collection by Rachel Kay Shuttleworth who offered an interesting insight into collections of everyday textiles from the local community. The aim was to assist families to preserve their textiles for the longest time possible. Within the community workshops the artist sparks conversations about reuse and repair and about how fabrics of the past have been adapted throughout time, through fashion, patterns and styles for common use. The artist instigates discussions that allow people to consider the reuse of tiny scraps and even that worn beyond repair and how these can still be useful.

Resilient Stitch connects to the book *The Found Object in Textile Ar*t (Holmes, 2010, p. 9). Holmes discusses the fact that old fabrics and paper bring past histories and stories together to transform into a new surface which constructs a type of alchemic reaction that goes beyond the surface materials often having a connection to a given place of a particular time in history. It is the materials that inform the process and is similarly constructed to the ‘Okiboda’ or fisherman's jacket that I have previously discussed, whereby the women would construct their husband’s fisherman coats from leftover

pieces of old Kimono. By stitching reused fabric together with techniques such as Bora Bora stitch the recreation of tattered textiles were reworked and repaired by the women of the household.

Fig. 22: Cas Holmes-Themes & Techniques

Thread (2021) is an exhibition that I attended at the Elysium Gallery in Swansea. It brought together four artists from different cultures. who through their textile practice discussed their lives and the metaphoric language and literal meaning behind the word ‘thread’. The artists acted as storytellers, being a witness with their own work and acted simultaneously in the action of healing through textiles. Through undertaking a workshop with Angela Maddock a curator of the exhibition she allowed us to look at works we were interested in and focus in on the threads, or the joins microscopically. Through drawing the detail of the interconnected threads and seams a relationship through reflection of being still and at one with a given piece was created. This way of

working very much connects to my own work practices regarding slow stitch, mindfulness and the journey as it is not always the end product but it is the process we take to get to the final destination that is important.

Fig 23: Shelly Goldsmith- Locust of the Dress

Myth and Spiritualty

From the book *Cloth and Human Experience* by Weiner, A.B and Schneider, J (1991 p.377- 407), in Japanese mythology the mulberry plant and its fibres are considered the

main ingredient of sacred threads. This humble tree-based fibre was essential Shinto Worship and usually performed by women for their households and was understood to be essential to human welfare.

Fig.24: Mulberry

In Okinawa the different grades of cloth produced from the Mulberry plant was used to create ritualistic robes, royal garments and also utilitarian dress. Banana fibre was another textile used and symbolised the cultural identity of the Okinawan weavers. Banana fibre of the best quality was split as finely as possible and the thread was dyed numerous times in indigo. This dying process was done over a five day period.

Fig. 25: Okinawan Kimono

Auspicious and formal occasions called for the creation of special dyed Indigo garments that were not only made for priestesses but also for ordinary folk who were for example a part of funeral ceremonial gatherings and were appointed to individuals of special spiritual power. Other spiritual belief systems associated with textiles and the Okinawan people were that of the Uminai or remembrance towels that were woven by women with the aim to protect their husbands and brothers on journeys across land and ocean. By weaving both spiritual power and affection into an item the fibres were said to of taken on good fortune.

Being the woman's responsibility, weaving and household worship was a reflection of an ancient order. An example of this is that the Okinawan women would express to a lover her affection through her weaving. Folk songs from every village, were used to exemplify

the deep emotion felt whilst creating these works as discussed by Weiner and Schneider (1997, p.405) a line of folksong is illustrated through the wording “I wind on the skeins of twenty-yomi thread to make my beloved a formal robe like a dragonfly wing*”.* These woven works of the Okinawan women did not just adorn their family members and keep them warm, but it was believed they also protected them on a spiritual level. According to their belief systems a living person is activated by the presence of a spirit located in the chest called a Mabui. According to the Okinawan people at the time of death, this spirit withdraws from the body but not only at the time of death it can also be stolen or lost when the Mabui is thought to have escaped. A member of the victim’s family was responsible for performing the rites that would reinstate the Mabui by performing a ritual for returning the Mabui back to the person. By collecting three pebbles from a particular place the family member would bind the pebbles inside the garment behind the neck allowing this spiritual process to take place. The pebbles were sewn in the seam of the kimono so that the Mabui was kept in place, this process was created on kimonos that dressed the dead.

Conclusion

The aim of this research has been to underpin the value and meaning behind ritualistic everyday textile practices that interlock the creator, the process of creation, and the outcome. This leads to a textile object imbued with meaning, be it ‘the Everyday’ or ‘the Sacred’, and there are meaningful crossovers on this continuum. I set out to examine the value of simplicity and spiritual connection behind sacred fabrics and the weaving of rituals and myth into everyday textiles. I have shown that the key areas of my research pertain to the value and meaning of such objects.

The meaning of the word ‘sacred’ and the relationship to myth reveals the mysterious cultural narratives that align to the contrasting elements of the ‘everyday’. By exploring primary experiences focused on the Japanese culture and touching on my own personal stories of growing up in Australia. Metaphorically this speaks of the lifecycles of our own journey from birth to death. This allows us to connect a loom of life threads integrating a new unique warp and weft that restores our connection to the present and changes our perceptions of the past, which embellishes a new future of personal divination associated to the supposed mundane autobiographical ‘everyday’ occurrence.

Cultures and their ceremonial events throughout time have used a variety of objects including that of textiles to link the physicality of these items to a realm of supernatural belief systems that elevate the viewer or wearer to a sense of ‘holiness’. Holiness and the reliquaries of time formulate a portal of ancestral contact that glues past and present, defining a moment and impregnating a god like perception of ‘oneness’ and a gravitational traction to personal practices.

The unconscious elements of the everyday specifically connected to textiles do not always culminate in an obvious inner reflection of the simplistic. If a woman or man creates a simplistic garment with free mindedness this essential meditation forges a direct correspondence to the unintended purpose, that would otherwise be overlooked. Focus and fortitude play an integral role in the elimination of the conscious and intended disciplines of 'the everyday', implying the notion that we who premeditate a creation do not always associate and fertilize meaning upon an object, but stifle its natural construct and hinder its pure essence.

The power of the hand and unconscious mind together act as a combined instrument that manifests objects of beauty, love and meaning. Some would say that an uncomplicated knitted jumper is an act of uninventive foresight. What many people do not understand is that it is the emotional unintended energy sublimated upon an item that generates a sense of culture, place and significance bringing forth a sense of home and understanding.

Through this research, I have discovered that the everyday creation of textiles is not a mediocracy but an integral part of cultural narratives that are formulated amongst close knit community experiences and then transferred and transformed into items made from love. The vast and complex array of life experiences and the transferal of these memoirs into objects, creates a memory of value and meaning all channeled spiritually via heart and hand.

As a Surface Pattern Design student, I plan to build upon knowledge gained from my dissertation research by exploring cultural tribal crafts related to textiles including but not limited to weaving, printing and dyeing. Further discovered information pertain to myth

and ritual that develop my own set of sacred symbolism connected to sub cultural storylines through life discoveries and interests. I feel this topic can be rediscovered time and time again and the unearthing of one idea leads to an ongoing educational formula linking ancestral timelines and historical meaning for years to come.

Bibliography

Anon (2008) *The fabric of myth.* Warwickshire: Compton Verney.

Buchanan, I. (2010) "everyday life." In *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Oxford : Oxford University Press. Available at: https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780199532919.001.0001/acref-9780199532919-e-235 (Accessed: November 20 2021)

Carroll, T. (2017) Textiles and the Making of Sacred Space. *Textile history*. [Online] 48 (2), 192–210.

Como, M. (Michael I. (2005) 'Silkworms and consorts in Nara Japan', *Asian Folklore Studies*, 64(1), pp. 111–131. Available at: https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001473210&site=ehost-live (Accessed: 20 November 2021).

Gale, M.-A. *et al.* (2012) 'Lakun Ngarrindjeri thunggari: Weaving the Ngarrindjeri language back to health', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2012(2), pp. 42–53. Available at: https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=84417385&site=ehost-live (Accessed: 20 November 2021).

Gordon, J. (2010) 'Maritime Influences on Traditional Knitwear Design: The Case of the Fisherman's Gansey: An Object Study', *Textile history*, 41(1), pp. 99–108.

Hirasawa, C. & Lomi, B. (2018) Modest Materialities: The Social Lives and Afterlives of Sacred Things in Japan. *Japanese journal of religious studies*. [Online] 45 (2), 217–

Hoad, T.F. (1996) *The Concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hodges, R., Birnbaum, A. and Sudo, K. (1997) *Boro boro*. Tokyo: Nuno

Holmes, C. (2010) *The found object in textile art*. London: Batsford.

Horikiri, T. and Wagoner, R., 2016. *The stories clothes tell : voices of working-class Japan.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ingold, T.(2013) *Making : anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture.* London ;: Routledge.

Krawiec, R. (2009) '"Garments of Salvation": Representations of Monastic Clothing in Late Antiquity', Journal of early Christian studies, 17(1), pp. 125–150. doi:10.1353/earl.0.0239.

Lester, A.E. (2018) 'Intimacy and Abundance: Textile Relics, the Veronica, and Christian Devotion in the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade', *Material religion*, 14(4), pp. 533–544. doi:10.1080/17432200.2018.1539577.

Lundskow, G. (2008). Religion Beyond Religion: Sacredness, Mystery, and Faith in Other Contexts. In: 2008. *The Sociology of Religion: A Substantive and Transdisciplinary Approach*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. pp. 375-396 Available at: <http://www.doi.org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.4135/9781483329468.n10> [Accessed 20 Nov 2021].

Mac Aulay, S. & Te Waru Rewiri, K. (1996) Maori Weaving*:* The Intertwining of Spirit, Action and Metaphor. Sacred and Ceremonial Textiles: *Proceedings of the Fifth Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America*, Chicago, Illinois.

Nickell, J. (2007) *Relics of the Christ*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Nickell, J., & Randi, J. (2004) Scandals and Follies of the "Holy Shroud." In *The Mystery Chronicles: More Real-Life X-Files* (pp. 187–199). University Press of Kentucky.

Scott, P. (2020) Holiness in Old English: The Construction of the Sacred in Ælfric's Lives of Saints. *Neophilologus*. [Online] 104 (4), pp.547–566.

Soetsu, Y. and Leach, B., (1976) The Pure Land of Beauty. *The Eastern Buddhist,* 9(1), pp. 18-41.

Stevenson, A., (2010) *Oxford dictionary of English.* 3 edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Threads (2021) [Exhibition]. Elysium, Swansea. 10 September 2021-16 October 2021.

Wellesley-Smith, C., (2021) *Resilient stitch: wellbeing and connection in textile art.* London: Batsford.

Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J. (1991) *Cloth and human experience*. Washington ;: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Additional Reading List

Arai, P. (2011) Domestic Zen:; Living Esoteric Wisdom. *Bringing Zen Home.* University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 108-166.

Arai, P. and Yasuaki, N.K.Ō (2011) *Bringing Zen Home : The Healing Heart of Japanese Women's Rituals.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Beaudry, M.C. (2020) *Two. The Lowly Pin.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Brons, C. (2017) *Gods and Garments : Textiles in Greek Sanctuaries in the 7th to the 1st Centuries BC.* Havertown: Oxbow Books, Limited.

Cavell, M. (2016) The Material Context of Weaving. *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies.* University of Toronto Press, pp. 17-46.

Classen, C. (2012a) Tactile Arts. *The Deepest Sense.* University of Illinois Press, pp. 123-146.

Classen, C.(2012b) A Woman's Touch. *The Deepest Sense.* University of Illinois Press, pp. 71-92.

Hareven, T.K. (2002a) *The Silk Weavers of Kyoto; Family and Work in a Changing Traditional Industry.* 1 edn. University of California Press.

Hareven, T.K. (2002b) A World within a World. *The Silk Weavers of Kyoto.* 1 edn. University of California Press, pp. 25-50.

Hirasawa, C. and Lomi, B. (2018) Modest Materialities: The Social Lives and Afterlives of Sacred Things in Japan. *Japanese journal of religious studies,* 45(2), pp. 217.

Krag, A.H. (2007a) Christian Influences and Symbols of Power in Textiles from Viking Age Denmark; Christian Influence from the Continent. In: C. GILLIS and M.B. NOSCH, eds, *Ancient Textiles.* Oxbow Books, pp. 237-244.

Krag, A.H. (2007b) Christian Influences and Symbols of Power in Textiles from Viking Age Denmark; Christian Influence from the Continent. In: C. GILLIS and M.B. NOSCH, eds, *Ancient Textiles.* Oxbow Books, pp. 237-244.

Leeming, D. (2005). Sacred king, sacred queen. In The Oxford Companion to World Mythology. : Oxford University Press.

Levy, I.H. (1984) *Hitomaro and the Birth of Japanese Lyricism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lewis, J.R. and Pizza, M. (2009) *Handbook of contemporary paganism.* Leiden ;: Brill.

Netherton, R., Owen-Crocker, G. and Wright, M.I. (2014) *Medieval clothing and textiles.* Suffolk, England: The Boydell Press.

Nosch, M. and Gillis, C.(2007) *Ancient Textiles Production, Crafts and Society.* Havertown: Oxbow Books.

Ooms, H. (2017) *LITURGIES.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Ooms, H. (2009) ALIBIS. *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan.* University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 49-85.

Piction, J. (1996) Display And Modesty: North African Textiles / Secular And Sacred: Ethiopian Textiles. *African arts,* 29(3), pp. 76.

Powers, K. (1991) *Knitted heirloom a baby treasure from Mama: FINAL Edition.* Austin, Tex: GateHouse Media, Inc.

Saran, S. (2018) *Cultural and Civilisational Links between India and Southeast Asia Historical and Contemporary Dimensions.* 1 edn. Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Shukla, P.(2008) *The Grace of Four Moons Dress, Adornment, and the Art of the Body in Modern India.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Tcherkezoff, S. (2008) *Sacred cloth and sacred women. On cloth, gifts and nudity in Tahitian first contacts: a culture of 'wrapping-in'.* ANU E Press.

Walthall, A. and Taseko, M.(1997) The Cult of Sensibility in Rural Tokugawa Japan: Love Poetry by Matsuo Taseko. *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 117(1), pp. 70-86.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Bembo, B.(1441-47) *The Pope, fascimile of a Tarot Card from the 'Visconti' deck* [Colour lithography] Private Collection/ Bridgman Education City (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 2: Japanese Photographer (19th Century) *Making a Kimono* [photograph] Private Collection/ Bridgeman Education City? (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 3: Japanese School (19th Century) *Japanese Silk and Fabric Shop* [Hand coloured Photograph] Biblioteque des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, , France/ Charme/ Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 4: Lang, L (1857) *A Sewing Party* [*oil on canvas*] Private Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 5: Trevorrow, E , *Assorted Artworks* [Weaving] Camp Coorong/Ngarrindjeri Culture/Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority Available at: https://www.ngarrindjeri-culture.org/gallery (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 6: Rinehart, F (1899) Native *American woman and child, woman and baby of the Wichita Indian tribe* [black and white photograph] Everett Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 7: unknown (1850-1900) Japan, *Robe* [boro stitch] Victoria and Albert Museum Available at:https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/make-your-own-japanese-boro-bag (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 8: Japanese School (late 19th century) *Japanese weaving loom* [print] Private Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 9: English School (19th century) *The Paris International Exhibition, Illustration for The Illustrated London News* [engraving] Private Collection/Look and Learn/Illustrated Papers Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 10: Sakura, M & Vandestra, M (2018) *Japanese Folklore Tales of the Beautiful Weaving Maiden Bilingual Edition English and Spanish* [book] Available at: https://www.overdrive.com/media/3966556/japanese-folklore-tales-of-the-beautiful-weaving-maiden (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 11: Hillers, JK, (1843-1925) *Portrait of a 13 year old Hopi girl named Modisi sitting in front of two Navajo blankets* [albumen print] Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, UK/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 12: Piedmont, Italy, *The Shroud of Turin* [black and white photograph] SZ Photo/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 13: Raimondi, M (1927) *The Veil of Veronica, or Sudarium* [engraving] Meyers Lexicon,pub / Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 14: Bernardo, D (14th century) *Legend of the Holy Belt (predelle of Santa Cintola polyptych)* [painting, oil on wood] Museo Civico, Prato, Italy/Luisa Riccianni/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 15: Stuart, F.G.O (1897) *representatives of New Zealand in London for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria* [silver gelatin print] Private Collection/Micheal Graham-Stewart/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 16: (1955) *Front page of magazine 'Psyche' about Sigmund Freud,* Collection Bourgeron/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 17: Horikiri, T Wagoner , R (2016) *The stories clothes tell : voices of working-class* Japan [Textiles] Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 18: Horikiri, T Wagoner , R (2016) *The stories clothes tell : voices of working-class* Japan [Textiles] Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 19: Beato, F (1868) *Japanese Yakonin in Dress of Ceremony* [albumen print, hand tinted) Private Collection/Christies Images/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 20: Gordon, J. (2010) *'Maritime Influences on Traditional Knitwear Design: The Case of the Fisherman's Gansey: An Object Study', Textile history* (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 21: Wells, D (2021) *My own stitch exploration* [photos of my textiles] (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 22: Cas Holmes-Themes & Techniques [blog] Available at:https://theartyteacher.com/cas-holmes-themes-techniques/ (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 23: Goldsmith, S (2021) *Locust of the Dress* [textiles] Thread Exhibition/ Elysium Gallery/Swansea UK/Available at: https://www.elysiumgallery.com/events/event/thread/ (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 24: *Mulberry* [engraving] Private Collection/Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

Figure 25: Japanese School Basho-fu with kasun (19th century) *Okinawan Kimono,* Seattle Art Museum, Seattle USA/ Bridgeman Images (Accessed: 16 December 2021)