

Short Subjects

Oldest Dress Found

Dress found in Egypt Tarkhan excavation is at least 5100 years old.



Photo: © UCL Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology

While archaeologists have uncovered ceramic fragments and tools dating back tens of thousands of years, clothing is another story. Since most garments are made of delicate materials like linen and wool, ancient clothing finds are extremely rare—which is what makes the Tarkhan dress so unique.

According to recent radiocarbon dating tests, the Tarkhan dress is between 5100 and 5500 years old, making it the oldest dress ever found. The dress comes from the so-called Tarkhan excavations conducted in the early 1900s in Egypt about 30 miles south of Cairo. According to the study in *Antiquity*, the dress was buried in a tomb for thousands of years, and came quite close to never being discovered at all. While the main Tarkhan excavations occurred from 1912 to 1913, the dress was overlooked and lumped

with a pile of rags. It was found more than six decades later, in 1977, when a bundle of miscellaneous textiles were sent to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London for conservation.

The dress would have been worn by a member of the Egyptian upper class, and, although it came from an Egyptian tomb, it was originally created for the living, not the dead; it shows signs of wear.

It's not the only example of an ancient garment, but it is the only one to have been "cut, fitted, and tailored," the researchers write.

"A handful of garments of similar age have survived to the present day, but those were simply wrapped or draped around the body," explains National Geographic. "The Tarkhan dress, on the other hand, is ancient haute couture."

Three Costume Exhibits at Kent State Museum

Fibers, flappers, and fashion on display at Ohio university museum.

Three exhibits are on display through July and September at the [Kent State University Museum](#) galleries.

Focus: Fiber 2016 is a juried exhibition of contemporary fiber art coordinated by Textile Art Alliance. Textile

Art Alliance (TAA), an affiliate group of the Cleveland Museum of Art, is an active organization of artists, designers, craftspeople, educators and collectors with a common interest in the textile and fiber arts. The exhibit runs through July 3, 2016.



Flapper Style: 1920s Fashion is at the Broadbent Galley through September 4, 2016. The flapper is widely seen as the epitome of 1920s glamor and decadence. The term refers to the generation of young women who came to age just as World War I ended and shocked the older generation with their short hair and short skirts, their drinking and smoking and swearing. Flappers faced a world strikingly different from the one their mothers knew and their clothing reflected this dramatic break with the past.

In the Igbee Gallery, *Inside Out: Revealing Clothing's Hidden Secrets* highlights the art of beautiful workmanship that is hidden when the pieces are worn. This exhibition showcases these secret inner-workings that are usually out of sight. Weights, pockets, quilted linings, boning, ruffles and labels all come to light when the garments are flipped inside out. The exhibition runs through July 31, 2016.

R2-D2 Creator Dies

Special effects expert who built Star Wars robot found dead on Maltese island of Gozo.



Special effects wizard Tony Dyson, who built the Star Wars R2-D2 robot, was found dead at his house on the Maltese island of Gozo, officials said March 4th, 2016.

The body of the 68-year-old Briton was discovered after friends alerted police that they had not seen him for a number of days, the Times of Malta reported. There was no immediate suspicion of foul play.

Dyson, who owned The White Horse Toy Company, was commissioned to make eight R2-D2 robots for the film series plus the master moulds and an additional head. He said working on it was "one of the most exciting periods of my life". The look of R2-D2 was created by the conceptual designer Ralph McQuarrie who also created Darth Vader, Chewbacca and C-3PO.

He made four remote control units - two units for the actor Kenny Baker to sit in with a seat fitted inside and two throw away units to be used in a bog scene in *Empire Strikes Back* where a monster spits out R2-D2 onto dry land, from the swamp.

He had also built robots for various technology firms, including Sony, Philips and Toshiba.

Swagged and Poufed

RISD Museum exhibits the upholstered body in the late 19th C. and today.

In 1890, designer William Morris quipped that women were “upholstered like arm chairs.” Buried under folds, ruching, tassels, and fringe, they were on the verge of becoming fixtures in their own drawing rooms.

The exhibit “Swagged and Poufed: The Upholstered Body in the Late 19th Century and Today,” at the Angelo Donghia Costume and Textiles Gallery at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum, features women’s clothing from the past and present that shares aesthetics with upholstered furnishing styles of the late 1800s.

The contemporary fashion pieces emulate overlapping trends in 19th century women’s fashion and interior design. A center case in the gallery presents dresses, mantles, rugs and a carpetbag from the time period alongside contemporary fashions that bear similar designs, and a three-minute film accompanies the exhibit.

The late 19th century pieces bear an “upholstered look” that “represents a time when there was much emphasis

on textiles both for the interior and on the body,” said Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles for the RISD Museum. The quality, layering and elaborate manipulations of textiles for furnishings and fashion demonstrated a woman’s “personal refinement,” she said.

The preoccupation with textiles was tied to the Industrial Revolution and the far reach of empire during this period, she said. “Upper-class women spent much of their social life within the confines of the drawing room — nearly becoming one with the drawing room — though the soft furnishings of her interior and the fashions worn on her body made explicit reference to the riches and reach of colonialist enterprises during this period,” she said.

The exhibit also reveals their continued influence in contemporary designs by Kenzo Takada, Gianfranco Ferré for Dior, and Maison Martin Margiela.

The exhibit at the [Rhode Island School of Design \(RISD\) Museum](#) in Providence Rhode Island runs throughout July 3rd, 2016.



House of Worth, design house French, 1858-1952.
Charles Frederick Worth, designer British, 1825-1895.
Reception Dress, ca. 1874.
Silk plain weave with cotton net inserts and silk embroidery, appliqué, and fringe.

17th Century Silk Dress Found in Shipwreck

Noblewoman's silk damask gown buried under sands off the coast of North Holland

The island of Texel in the Wadden Sea off the coast of North Holland forms a natural barrier where ships have sheltered, waiting for favorable winds or taking on crew and cargo. The bad weather in the area has also resulted in hundreds of shipwrecks.

Wrecks that were protected by the sand for hundreds of years can be exposed as currents shift. In August of 2014, divers from the Texel Diving Club discovered artifacts from the wreck of a well-armed merchant ship, buried since it sank in the 17th century. One item was a bundle buried in the sand. When they brought it to the surface, they discovered a cache of antique textiles. The find was not announced right away to protect the site while conservators examined and stabilized the items.

One of the items in the bundle was a unique find in exceptional condition: a high-quality silk damask gown with a pattern of flowers that [later analysis](#) showed probably belonged to Jean Kerr, Countess of Roxburghe (c. 1585-1643), a lady in waiting to English Queen Henrietta Maria. The delicate silk survived for over 400 years because it was protected from oxygen and animals while buried in the sand.

The dress included a bodice with loose-fitting sleeves and sleeve caps, and a full pleated skirt open in the front. The neck has

an upright collar. The style can be seen in paintings from the early 17th century.

The rest of the extensive wardrobe included a jacket, silk knee socks and silk bodices woven with gold and silver thread. Since all of the pieces are the same size, archaeologists think that all of the clothes belonged to the same woman. Only the gown shows signs of significant wear, which suggests it was intended for everyday use. The lack of silver and gold embroidery in the bodices also supports this conjecture.

Experts agree it is one of the most important textile finds ever made in Europe. The gown was on display through May 16th at the Kaap Skil Museum on Texel. It will undergo further research before going on permanent display. The finds belong to the Province of North Holland.



Noblewoman's silk damask gown from 17th century shipwreck on display at the Kaap Skil Museum. Image courtesy Kaap Skil.

Website Helps Date Old Photos

Resource helps you use features in a photo to deduce its date

A resource from the University of Vermont helps date historical photos based on items in the photos, such as cars, clothing, hair, street lights, billboards, etc.

Their introduction describes how it works. “So, what can you do with an old photograph and no date? Well, you can deduce that date, and our site is going to help you! Photographs are filled with evidence that tells a story about that snapshot in time. What is that evidence? It is our built environment; it is the clothing we wear; it is the tools and machinery that we use; it is the natural landscape. Every feature you see in an historic image is an important clue to its date.”

The site enables you to choose a feature from one of their categories that appears in an undated photo. Categories include: transportation, roadside features, agricultural features, buildings, human features, and other features. The site will display dated images of similar features from dated photos in their archive that can help you determine the date of your image.

In addition to the image catalog, the site includes a [tutorial](#) that helps you use the resource to date your historical photo.

For more information, visit the “Dating Historical Images” [website](#).