

## 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dress, Textiles and Portraiture at Gawthorpe Hall

**Tuesday 14 May 2024, 11.20–16.00**

A day of specialist presentations and tours exploring the interconnections between dress, textiles and portraiture during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, organised by the Understanding British Portraits Network (UBP) and the Textiles and Dress Specialists (DATS). Aimed at museum professionals, researchers and academics, the study day will investigate some highlights from the Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth textiles collection and the portrait collection at Gawthorpe Hall, which includes a large number of loans from the National Portrait Gallery.

Gawthorpe Hall, a beautiful mansion surrounded by landscaped gardens and woodland, was built for the Shuttleworth family in 1600-05, and retains Elizabethan panelling and plasterwork of outstanding quality. It was sensitively restored in the 1850s by Sir Charles Barry in collaboration with A.W.N. Pugin and was the only country house in which these two great architects of the Palace of Westminster collaborated. As a result, the collection is rich in Gothic Revival furniture and metalwork. Situated just outside Burnley in Lancashire, the Hall is today owned by the National Trust and managed by Lancashire County Council.

The Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, widely recognised as one of the finest collection of textiles in the UK, was built by Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth (1886-1967) in the first half of the 1960s for the study and practice of textiles and embroidery, based upon her own remarkable collections. Previously based at Gawthorpe Hall for over half a century, the collections have recently been carefully relocated to Northlight in Brierfield, a site which provides the space and flexibility to store and continue to grow the collection, as well as providing a modern, fit-for-purpose workshop space to increase public access and engagement.

### Programme

- 10.45 Delegates to meet at Preston Station and travel by coach to the Gawthorpe Textiles Collection at Northlight, Brierfield. (Delegates wishing to arrive independently are welcome to do so)
- 11.20 Arrival and welcome
- 11.30 Introduction to the Gawthorpe Textiles Collection including handling session with Curator Rachel Midgley
- 12.10 Jill Burke, Professor of Renaissance Visual and Material Cultures at the University of Edinburgh

In 1665, the physician Thomas Jeamson published his *Artificiall Embellishments* - a book that tells its readers, the frontispiece declares, 'How to Preserve Beauty or Procure It'. This manual of cosmetic recipes and tips – largely plagiarized from decades' old French and Italian texts – is the most complete manual for women's beauty produced in early modern England. Using this and other cosmetic recipe texts alongside portraiture and women's writings, this talk will consider how central bodily and facial beauty was to women's lives in early modern England. I will discuss how women's appearance was constantly a matter for comment and debate, embroiled in religious and political controversy, and could be central to women's life chances. Looking more closely at a selection of Jeamson's recipes, I will also demonstrate the

knowledge and skill inherent in the creation of cosmetics in a domestic setting. The talk will finish by sharing some of the results of our reconstructions of early cosmetics and perfumes for participants to try.

- 12.40 Professor Jenny Tiramani, Principal at the School of Historical Dress
- Possibly, Probably, Almost Certainly: What the detailed study of extant textiles and dress can tell us about the dress we see in portraiture.
- Using an extant garment or textile and comparing it to visual depictions of such a style or technique, ideally with contemporary documents related to it, can create a more complete comprehension of the item in question, together with applying the four 'C's of dress; Content, Cut, Construction and Context. This presentation will look at the portraits at Gawthorpe Hall and 17<sup>th</sup>-century woven textiles, lace and embroidery in the Gawthorpe Textile Collection as part of the triangle of evidence my colleagues and I use to help us construct interpretations of what the English elite were wearing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, including those aspects of dress which portraiture shows us glimpses of, but for which there can be no certainty.
- 13.15 Lunch (provided)
- 14.00 Transfer by coach to Gawthorpe Hall
- 14.15 Introduction to the portrait collection with Catharine MacLeod, Curator of Seventeenth-century Portraits at the National Portrait Gallery, and Gawthorpe Hall staff
- 15.00 Time to explore Gawthorpe Hall
- 16.00 Delegates to travel back to Preston by coach

### Speaker Biographies

#### **Rachel Midgley**

Rachel Midgley has been the Curator of Gawthorpe Textiles Collection for six years and Assistant Curator there for several years before that. She studied Costume Design and Construction at university and while historical costume is still her first love, working with the collection at Gawthorpe has instilled a passion for many other areas of textiles as well.

#### **Jill Burke**

Professor Jill Burke is a historian of visual and material culture based at the University of Edinburgh. Her current research considers cosmetics and beauty cultures in Renaissance and early modern Europe. Many of these findings are in her latest book, *How to Be A Renaissance Woman* (Profile Books 2023).

#### **Jenny Tiramani**

Having trained as a stage and costume designer Jenny spent 45 years working in the theatre before co-founding The School of Historical Dress with Santina M. Levey in 2009, where she and her colleagues now teach short courses, hold exhibitions and publish books focused on surviving clothing.

#### **Catharine MacLeod**

Catharine MacLeod is Senior Curator, 17th Century Collections at the National Portrait Gallery. She is responsible for the acquisition, display and interpretation of portraits dating from this period, as well as providing advice to colleagues, members of the public and other institutions, and undertaking research both on the Gallery's collection and on seventeenth-century British portraiture more generally.