



Art Conservation *and supporting history*

Created by Italian designer Elsa Schiaparelli in the winter of 1936-1937, the full-length women's coat of soft black bouclé wool is shapely and sophisticated. The coat was donated as part of a larger gift from Schiaparelli to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1969, the coat's fitted bodice tapers to the waist before flaring out to a full skirt, while large lapels feature oversized iridescent blue sequins that exemplify the designer's interest in elaborate and unique embellishments. Even resting full-length in a storage box, the coat looks ready for a stylish night on the town. The coat's sapphire blue silk lining was another matter, as Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation Fellow Jackie Peterson learned last June when she began a six-month internship in the PMA's textile lab. The chemical process used to create the stiffness that made the silk lining integral to the coat's elegant shape had, unfortunately, also accelerated the rate of degradation and caused the lining to tear and split. This significantly changed the coat's appearance and meant that the lining required treatment before the coat could safely travel or be displayed as planned as part of a fall exhibition, titled *Dali and Schiaparelli*, at the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Jackie's consultations with the curator and conservators led to a decision to line the original lining with a second, full lining in order to ensure the coat's long-term preservation. Accomplishing this required taking the unusual step of separating the original lining from the coat so that an overall support lining could be adhered to its back side. Jackie created the new support lining from pieces of custom-dyed silk crepe that she had cut using a pattern she created by carefully measuring the original lining. The pieces of crepe, which had been coated with adhesive prior to cutting, were arranged on the back of the matching silk panel in the original lining. The adhesive was then reactivated with solvent vapor and pressure to create a strong bond between the two layers of material. Once the new support lining was in place, Jackie stitched the crepe and silk lining together along seams to provide extra stability.

Jackie completed her 145-hour treatment by rejoining the newly supported lining to the coat. Because the crepe had been applied to the back side of the silk, Jackie's treatment was virtually invisible when the coat was reassembled. The coat, however, could now safely take its place in the *Dali and Schiaparelli* exhibition.



ARTC Spotlight—September 2017

The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators who are well versed in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifacts and entire collections. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at www.artcons.udel.edu.

Top: After the crepe was applied to the back of the lining, WUDPAC Fellow Jackie Peterson used laid-and-couched stitches to further support particularly fragile areas and large splits. Above: First, the lining was separated from the rest of the coat by carefully removing the stitches that held the layers together. Far left: Large pieces of custom-dyed crepe were then coated with a stable acrylic adhesive mixture and when dry, cut to match the lining before reactivating the adhesive. Left: The coat reassembled after treatment and fitted on a mannequin to confirm shape and support. (Photos: Martina Ferrari, Lisa Stockebrand.)