**RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

Textile artifacts act as a barometer for tracing the ever-evolving and often-conflicting identities and rituals of a society. The intersection of textiles, architecture, culture, history, as well as the contemporaneity of our existence is retrieved in a museum environment. Architecture, through its inherent interrelationship with textiles, is the constitutive element competent of unifying the whole in a contemporary locale while simultaneously manifesting the contrasting cultural and historical peculiarities of the parts. New, innovative, and communicative design strategies for textile-exhibiting techniques of historical textiles that prospered throughout the Egyptian timeline belonging to the Pharaonic, Ptolemaic, Byzantine, and Islamic epochs, are to be achieved. Hence, the role of the contemporary museum and its architecture are challenged. This exploration will investigate textile exhibitions both as architecture and as a vehicle to translate a society’s cultural pasts.

**EXISTING THEORIES**

Textile artifacts in the context of a museum setting are the connecting point between history and contemporaneity. Hence is situated the signifier vs. signified theory. This principle is substantiated in textiles where the material object is the signifier, and its hidden narratives are the signifieds. As important as the textile piece are the tales it carries, as well as the contemporary physical setting, architecture, through which communication with the audience materializes. And, the tale is revealed through the detail, as Frascari declared. Few theorists throughout history have considered textile semantics and their alliance with architecture as well as other forms of art. The most prominent ones are John Ruskin (1819 - 1900) and Gottfried Semper (1803 - 1879). Their concepts regarding textiles are divergent as the former viewed textiles as “wall veils” and the latter regarded them as “space contributors”. Their beliefs are also contrasted with Owen Jones (1809 - 1874) and his grammar of ornaments, which is affiliated with the textile geometries, patterns, and their graphic depictions. The different textile theories and their association with architecture are presented not only to prove that there is a strong relationship between both, but also to set the foundation for developing textile display techniques that would reflect their signification, meaning and specificity.

**CASE STUDIES**

The purpose of conducting the following two case studies is to test the theories developed throughout the first half of the research. Choosing the Egyptian Textile Museum in Cairo and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for my case studies, as they exemplify the two institutions that contain the largest textile collection worldwide. The fact that both museums contain Egyptian textiles from the same era, thus a very similar collection, makes of a great opportunity to contrast and analyze them as well as conclude their differences and similarities. The Egyptian Textiles Museum is different from the Metropolitan Museum of Art as the former is a specialized one in Egyptian textiles. However, the MET is a substantially large institution that contains all types of artifacts from all over the world, some of which are Egyptian textiles that belong to its multifaceted timeline.

**THE EGYPTIAN TEXTILE MUSEUM**

**THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (COPTIC)**

**THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (ISLAMIC)**

**TEST DESIGN: MET ADDITION**

**CONCLUSION**

- Textile museums cannot function as blank slates. The architecture should converse the textile languages and embrace them.
- Since woven materials are the legitimate representation of space, membrane architecture is a way of manifesting fabrics as spatial enclosures. Thus, textiles are the architecture.
- Applying textile techniques, such as weaving, in design is a means textile semantics are translated through architectural substances.
- Visuality is not the only mode of celebrating textiles and their attributes, the acoustical and tactile dimensions are important, though unexamined, mediums that are yet to be further explored.
- Walls are not the only means of displaying textiles. Floors and ceilings represent underestimated venues for manifestation.
- Background narratives should go beyond text on item and section labels. They could be exemplified through advanced digital means, such as motion sensitive walls.
- Architects should be involved in the process of textile exhibition designing along with curators.