



## Winterthur Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **In Memoriam: Beloved Curator, Educator, and Friend Linda Eaton**

Winterthur, DE, August 19, 2021—The Winterthur community mourns the loss of our friend Linda Eaton, the retired John T. and Marjorie McGraw Director of Collections. Eaton passed the night of August 18, 2021, after a courageous battle against a long-term illness. Her contributions to Winterthur and the field of textile arts and history were numerous and invaluable. Her impact and influence are immeasurable.

Eaton is recognized around the world for her leadership in the field of interdisciplinary textile scholarship. Over more than 30 years at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, Eaton oversaw the acquisition, interpretation, care, and exhibition of the museum's textile collections, which includes nearly 20,000 furnishings, articles of clothing, rugs, quilts, and needlework. A specialist in textile conservation as well as textile history, she advanced technical and scientific knowledge of textiles broadly.



“Linda was one of those rare individuals who could speak with authority on detailed and technical matters one moment and in the next could sweep you away with her profound appreciation for the artistry and craft of an item,” said Chris Strand, the interim CEO of Winterthur. “She shared this gift through her teaching, her mentoring of staff and students, and the creation of our most popular and engaging exhibitions. All of us will miss her passion and her friendship.”

Eaton has shared her knowledge and expertise through teaching hundreds of graduate students in the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture and the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. She inspired future curators by widely sharing her enthusiasm with everyone from kindergartners and her graduate students to serious quilters,

stitchers, designers, embroiderers, and general audiences. Hundreds of loyal followers attended her regular needlework conferences at Winterthur.

Eaton curated popular and scholarly exhibitions about embroidery such as *Quilts in a Material World*; *Needles and Haystacks: Pastoral Imagery in American Needlework*; *With Cunning Needle: Four Centuries of Embroidery*; *The Diligent Needle: Instrument of Profit, Pleasure, and Ornament*; and *Embroidery: The Language of Art*, as well as *Betsy Ross: The Life Behind the Legend*, co-curated with Dr. Marla Miller. Eaton curated the popular *Treasures on Trial: The Art and Science of Detecting Fakes*, and she was an instrumental partner in one of Winterthur's most memorable exhibitions, *Costuming THE CROWN* in 2019, the only exhibition of costumes from the popular Netflix series.

Her publications include *Quilts in a Material World: Selections from the Winterthur Collection* (2007), and *Printed Textiles: British and American Cottons and Linens, 1700–1850* (2014), a revision of Florence Montgomery's seminal 1970 book. Eaton's latest publication, *Erica Wilson: A Life in Stitches*, co-authored with Anne Hilker, was released in December 2020.

“Linda must hold the record for number of scholarly publications and exhibitions emanating from Winterthur,” said Tom Savage, the former director of external affairs at Winterthur and a longtime friend. “Her *Quilts in a Material World* book and exhibition placed Winterthur's extraordinary collection in a global context. There was nothing parochial about her approach. She knew the wide world of textiles internationally and brought that vast knowledge to the study of the most minute topic. Her update of Florence Montgomery's *Printed Textiles* gave this landmark work new life as the publication of record on the topic. Two generations of scholars benefitted from her tutelage at Winterthur as conservator, then curator of textiles and McGraw director of collections, and her star pupils now head noted collections of textiles.”

Eaton's students and mentees care for renowned collections at such institutions as the Victoria and Albert Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the National Museum of the American Indian, Colonial Williamsburg, and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Museum Tongarewa, as well as Winterthur. Eaton was also a founding board member of the North American Textile Conservation Conference and a member of the board of Textile Society of America.

“Linda arrived in 1990 as the head of textile conservation and was initially my supervisor,” said Joy Gardiner, head of Conservation for Winterthur. “She quickly proved an excellent mentor to me and so many others, and she became a long-term good friend for my family—a wonderful presence and influence in our daughter's life. Linda was a textilian to her core and a staunch—one might even say fierce—advocate for the objects made from fibers and the people who created them. In her generous sharing of this advocacy in teaching, publications, workshops and

exhibitions, she fostered an expanded appreciation of the medium at Winterthur and well beyond. Her influence will be long lasting.”

Outside the museum and the classroom, Eaton served as the volunteer president of the Arden Craft Museum Board, which preserves the unique history of three communities known collectively as The Ardens. Linda’s leadership helped to transform the museum into a center of the villages that offers year-round programs and attracts researchers from around the country.

Eaton trained at the Textile Conservation Centre and the Courtauld Institute of Art before working for the National Museums of Scotland. Linda arrived at Winterthur in 1991 as a textile conservator. She became curator of textiles in 2000 and was promoted to director of museum collections and senior curator of textiles in 2009. Eaton was named the John L. and Marjorie P. McGraw Director of Collections and Senior Curator of Textiles in 2012. She retired in December 2020. A curator of textiles position was recently created in her name.

Click [here](#) for photo.

### **ABOUT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM, GARDEN & LIBRARY**

Winterthur—known worldwide for its preeminent collection of American decorative arts, naturalistic garden, and research library for the study of American art and material culture—offers a variety of tours, exhibitions, programs, and activities throughout the year. Admission includes the Winterthur garden, galleries, and a museum tour (by reservation).

Winterthur is located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, and five miles south of U.S. Route 1. Museum hours are 10:00 am–5:00 pm, Tuesday–Sunday. Winterthur is closed on Mondays (except during the Yuletide season), Thanksgiving, and Christmas. \$20 for adults; \$18 for students and seniors; \$6 for ages 2–11. Memberships are available for free and discounted admission. Winterthur is committed to accessible programming for all. For information, including special services, call 800.448.3883 or visit [winterthur.org](http://winterthur.org). Winterthur is closed seasonally from early January through late February.