Richardson, Catherine and Hamling, Tara (2016) *Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles.* Textile History, 47 (1). pp. 4-26. ISSN 0040-4969.

Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles

Catherine Richardson & Tara Hamling

Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles

C atherine R ichardson and T ara H amling

The article introduces and contextualises this special issue on 'Ways of Seeing Early Modern Decorative Textiles', which comprises a series of essays that draw on the activities, research findings and insights of an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research network, 'Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior, 1500–1700: The Case of Decorative Textiles'. Critically evaluating the results of the network's findings, the paper situates them within a broader investigation of the role of decorative textiles in shaping the experience of domestic interiors in the past and present, and explores new ways of reading such objects in the context of the household. It examines the historiography and current range of approaches to the study, interpretation and exhibition of historic textiles, and analyses the insights offered by bringing together different disciplinary and professional perspectives. It argues for the key significance of these textiles for both historical and modern perceptions of the domestic interior and for the importance of collaborative, cross-disciplinary approaches to researching them in order to understand how they functioned in the early modern period and to inform new directions for their display and presentation in the present.

Introduction

Item six peeces of Tapestrie hanging*es* and a chimney peece contayneinge about one hundred and foure flemish ells twoe Curtains and twoe rodd*es* for twoe wyndowes one french bedstedd one fetherbedd twoe bolsters three blankets one plaine white rugge a head cloth testerne double valence counterpoynt foote valence of blew cloth laced and the valence fringed a Co[rt] cupboard and Carpett sutable to the bedd a highe chaire wth elboes and a lowe chaire and a lowe stoole suteable to the bedd, a fire shovell and tongs a payre of Andyrons tipt wth brasse a payre of Cobyrons a payre of bellowes a great truncke and one little truncke preysed at [1]

xxiiij[li] xix[s] iiij[d]

This special issue analyses visual responses to the nature and quality of early modern English decorative textiles. In 1637 the contents of Lady Elizabeth Puckering's 'chamber in the new buyldinges' were listed (as above) at her husband's death. Walls, chimney, windows, bed, cupboard and chairs were all dressed with textiles of various kinds — from tapestry and carpets to blue cloth laced and fringed — the effect of which must have formed the principal impression of the room, visually overwhelming furniture and other decorative

features and forms. The range of textile items that could be seen in houses and their various material qualities were described in great detail in contemporary documents (particularly in account books and probate materials), which show their economic significance and indicate their visual impact. From wall coverings and curtains, bed hangings, tablecloths and carpets, cushions and upholstery, to intricately embroidered smaller items such as cabinets and pictures, textiles covered almost every surface of the early modern interior. William Harrison, in his comprehensive *Description of England* of 1577, stated their importance for the development of that interior and for a wider range of consumers than ever before: not only were the houses of gentlemen and merchants filled with 'great provision of tapestry, Turkey work [and] fine linen', but even the houses of artificers and farmers were adorned with 'tapestry and silk hangings, and their tables with carpets and fine napery'.[2] Recent research on the possessions of the 'middling sort' has broadly speaking borne out Harrison's claims, and even inventories lower down the social scale show a significant investment in domestic textiles.[3] Lady Elizabeth was not alone, then: these textiles defined the nature and status of the domestic interior up and down the social scale in early modern England, and yet comparatively little is known about the ways in which they functioned in their original spatial and material contexts. In this special issue, we argue that exploring the impact domestic textiles may have had on their viewers is crucial to our understanding of the social and cultural significance of domestic experience.

The papers included in this special issue are the outcome of research undertaken for a network on 'Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior 1500–1700: The Case of Decorative Textiles', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and are the result of the collaborations it enabled between museum and heritage professionals and scholars in the humanities and sciences.[4] This introductory article gives a context for the papers that follow, exploring the issues they raise from three different perspectives that offer methodologies for analysing ways of seeing early modern domestic textiles. First, 'Experience and Perception' suggests the need for an approach to decorative textiles and other domestic artefacts that encompasses the study as a cohesive whole of a *body* of objects which would originally have been viewed together, where the material qualities of the objects in question are seen as a series of triggers for the evaluative movements of the eye in detailed, close looking. Second, 'Spaces for Viewing' calls for an analysis of the specific visual contexts in which textiles were intended to be viewed, in order to explore how a space influences visual perception, experience and strategies for viewing their narrative qualities. The final section, 'Textiles and the Definition of Space', explores early modern and modern reactions to the relationship between textiles and spaces, the contribution domestic textiles made to household space as environment in the period of the 'great rebuilding' (as new kinds of rooms became common across the social scale in early modern England), and the connections between these changes and perceptions of privacy and comfort.

Early modern English textiles frequently offered a high level of narrative detail, including biblical and mythological stories, allegories and textual mottoes. We focus in particular on decorative textiles with figurative imagery, because these objects raise particular questions about the dynamics of perception between the narrative (reading, iconography), visual (form, colour) and material (texture, surface) qualities of early modern interiors. In a period before the widespread prioritisation of textual ways of engaging with the world, objects that contain visual narrative as well as some textual detail can help us to understand the role textiles played in the dissemination of moral precepts and various kinds of religious

FIG. 1.   Offcut pieces of border from the painted cloths at Owlpen Manor, Gloucestershire, early eighteenth century. These were removed when the cloths were moved from their original location and adapted for display in a different chamber.
Courtesy of Sir Nicholas Mander. Photograph: © Andrea Kirkham.

and secular learning within the household.[5] This introductory article therefore explores methods of reading early modern things which span text, image and texture.

In addition to being the most ubiquitous form of early modern decoration, however, these objects are amongst the least well-represented categories of both archaeological finds and museum collections. They could be moved from room to room (Fig. 1) and house to house, and translated into different kinds of object when they became unfashionable, and they were subject to various kinds of degradation as a result of, for example, the actions of light, wear and tear and insect damage.[6] Infinitely mutable and incredibly fragile, most have not survived, and those that are still extant may well be preserved in a partial state and have often lost colour and detail. Such unstable objects present significant challenges for interpretation, conservation, display and presentation (for example, condition, vulnerability to damage and surface deterioration caused by light and touch). While important work has been done to establish the heritage context within which decisions about display are linked to concepts of 'authenticity',[7] significant questions remain about the relationship between pre-modern ways of viewing and modern experiences. In order to recover any sense of their original appearance and function within given locations, it is necessary to reconstruct the ways in which historic textiles worked in their original state and context. Raising the profile of these objects by understanding more about their form and function will help to ensure their inclusion in both the re-presentation of early modern interiors and academic studies of their function within historical settings.

Our argument in this special issue is that studying domestic textiles is essential to our understanding of both the lived experience of the past and the modern visitor's experience of historic household spaces. But in order to understand these processes we need to investigate ways of analysing perception, that is, to explore how vision functions to process information in highly decorated spaces with extraordinary levels of narrative detail in order to allow people to comprehend and make use of the space. Existing approaches in the humanities only take us so far in reconstructing historical modes of seeing. Following Michael Baxandall's pioneering observations on the specificity of the 'period eye', scholarship now

tends to acknowledge that the viewing of artworks is a culturally constructed activity and therefore conditioned by time and place.[8] In other words, seeing is not a disinterested or universal biological response, but an activity influenced by period-specific cultural factors. More recent research in the field of visual culture has developed this insight to differentiate the basic physics and physiology of sight (vision) from modes of viewing that are culturally determined and conditioned by social values (visuality).[9] As Robert S. Nelson has observed: 'Attending to visuality helps avoid judgements that are essentializing and narrowly disciplinary and encourages the blurring of current intellectual boundaries'.[10] Accounting for human experience of visual artefacts, then, requires attention to both physiological and conceptual aspects to bridge the divide between studies of vision, as the domain of science, and research within the humanities concerned with the historical, social and cultural contexts that have informed the practice and experience of viewing.

Very little research within the humanities has focused on this question of the relationships between 'biological' and 'cultural' predispositions within processes of seeing in relation to historical artefacts, although there is increased attention within science to how visitors look at museum and gallery displays and how people read different kinds of relationships between image and text.[11] This has established the importance of attention to 'real world' environmental factors in the analysis of how vision works in practice, but is limited by its focus on viewer behaviour in the particular setting of museum and gallery exhibits. The arguments presented in this special issue acknowledge and investigate the conjunction between vision, understanding and location in the processes of seeing. This necessitates interaction between qualitative humanities and quantitative science methodologies: such interdisciplinary dialogue is essential if we are fully to understand the role of textiles in structuring the domestic interior, helping it to work as a coherent and meaningful space for social interaction.

Academic interest in the early modern household has developed considerably over the past two decades: in architectural and art history with descriptions of interiors and objects,[12] in social history with analysis of the material conditions of family life,[13] in literary studies with the centrality of the idea of domesticity to early modern ways of thinking and gendered behaviours,[14] and in material culture studies with explorations of a range of consumption practices and their economic, social and cultural motivations.[15] Most of these studies have very little, if anything, to say about the way the household's textiles functioned, however, despite their significance for the definition of status and the circulation of narratives through the stories they represent. Important work on this crucial element of interiors is mainly being produced within conservation and curatorial publications on issues associated with the preservation of historic interiors and textiles,[16] and in exhibition and collection catalogues.[17] These works have added enormously to our understanding of the techniques and meanings of individual objects but, as they respond to and develop from museum collections and exhibitions, there are further steps to be taken if we are to investigate textiles' *domestic* impact. It is one of the aims of this special issue to bring the study of such textiles and spaces into dialogue with one another.

Whilst the materials from which these textile objects were made have long been recognised for their key role in connecting local, national and international markets, more recent work has stressed the social role of their finished forms.[18] A recent large-scale quantitative analysis of English probate documents has demonstrated the economic significance of fabric items as one of the key categories of goods that were bought in increasing numbers

over the course of the sixteenth century, and the enduring appeal of domestic textile goods, including the development of new types, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[19] But, as Harrison's comment quoted above suggests, they were not only abundant but also socially significant. They were key to the definition of the emerging 'middling sorts', who invested a substantial percentage of their wealth in textile goods that advertised the sophistication and comfort of their domestic provision, and continued to be meaningful as a fundamental part of traditional modes of exhibiting élite status.[20] Conversely, such goods were also made within the home by growing numbers of leisured women, making them key to the construction of female identity in the period.[21] Because early modern people experienced these various forms of textiles as part of a wider visual culture, finding ways to bring these objects together and re-contextualising them (positioning within historic spaces and understanding modes of perception) permits us to consider in detail the intersecting impact of their economic, social and cultural significance. It also allows us to approach key historical questions about gender and social status by attending to the material qualities of these objects, which have been neglected in comparison to a long tradition of scholarship focusing on technical and aesthetic qualities.

One of this special issue's key aims is thus to bridge the gap between the interpretations of textiles offered by art historians and museum curators, often focused on narrative features (iconography) or technique (including the nature and skill involved in the use of materials), and the concerns of literary, social and cultural historians whose interest in the nature of domestic behaviour and response to moral and religious stimuli often fails to explore its material manifestations. The *use* of domestic textiles frequently falls down the gap between these disciplines, their methods, skills and concerns. Working on domestic experience, however, can bring together careful analysis of objects and the larger conceptual framework within which they were, and are, understood. It can also bridge academic and heritage concerns: understanding the domestic context for everyday life is not only an emergent area of academic debate, it is also a central interest of visitors to museums and historic properties who want to gain a meaningful experience of period interiors based on current understanding of their physical and conceptual authenticity. The rest of this introductory article thus aims to connect the findings of humanities', sciences' and museums' concerns with ways of seeing.

EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION

The concern with ways of seeing and interacting with domestic interiors is not only a feature of contemporary scholarship. It was a significant area of early modern interest, too, as sight and responses to it were the subjects of explicit examination. The level of discussion around the topic suggests a highly developed early modern interest in and awareness of these issues, and a propensity on the part of individuals to look judiciously, discriminatingly and in an engaged and comparative way at their domestic surroundings. This inclination is explored in Maria Hayward's contribution to this special issue. Her article analyses the construction and impact of the physical, cultural and aesthetic conditions for perceiving early modern textiles, in order to reconstruct contemporary responses to them. Through an analysis of printed and material evidence, Hayward questions the kind of knowledge that informed early modern individuals' viewing: she offers case studies of depictions of the senses at Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire and Knole in Kent, studying these schemes in relation to religious and

FIG. 2.   Looking at an embroidered box, 'Scenes from the Life of Abraham', anonymous, English, possibly Miss Bluitt, later Mrs Payne, c. 1665, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA 1947.191.315.

Published with permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Photograph: The Authors.

moral ideas of the 'eye of faith', Humanist representations of sight as a sense associated with women, and the élite mastery of the senses. She then considers how different ways of 'seeing' textile furnishings in this period were materially conditioned — by fading eyesight and looking glasses, times of the day, reflection in mirrors, and contemporary perceptions of the most immediately striking features of textiles, for instance colour and lustrousness.

Within these material, moral and intellectual constraints, a key area of concern in this special issue is the development of a method for the analysis of objects which allows us to investigate how they were constructed to encourage particular kinds of looking. An investigation of a range of relatively small and complex embroideries dating from the mid- to late seventeenth century in the Ashmolean Museum's collection, undertaken as part of the 'Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior 1500–1700' project, afforded the opportunity to study a *body* of objects as a cohesive whole, more faithful to the textiles' original domestic position, viewed in relation to one another. The scale of these objects was crucial to establishing the forms of early modern social practice and sociability with which they were implicated: very close viewing indicated the likelihood of individuals or small groups as the audiences for these embroidered textiles, as their overall size precluded larger-scale interactions. This suggested the importance of the movements required to view textiles in the round, such as embroidered scenes set within cabinets which involved opening their doors, and appreciating the narrative connections between the panels set within and without on each of their sides (Fig. 2).

In this kind of analysis, it is possible to read the material qualities of the objects in question as a series of triggers for the evaluative movements of the eye. The wide variety of materials used and the way complex scenes were put together, in terms of contrasts of texture and stitch, indicated the way makers conceptualised the design as a series of parts. Use of non-textile media (including metals and pearls) drew attention to features of the design due to their opulence and reflective quality, but they also signalled shifts in the elements that separated foregrounds from backgrounds and one element in a plane from another. Viewing such objects closely allowed insights into the visual dynamic created by different surfaces, colours, shapes, imagery and texts; the evaluation of similar imagery and

recurring motifs; the display of technical quality or skill; the different reflective qualities of, for example, silk in laid and stitched areas. Such a level of detail and distinction indicated a very close kind of looking in which connections were made between shifts in texture and in meaning, and narratives were formed by the judicious selection of contrasting materials and types of work as well as through motifs. The tactile qualities of makers' distinctions of texture and surface indicate a close connection between the haptic and intellectual responses at which they aimed.

Alongside these processes of distinction, the relationship between realism and stylisation is also significant. Hyper-real elements in the design, including the rendering of water, mirrors and foliage, aimed to mimic the natural forms they represented. Three-dimensional components disrupted the works' two-dimensional, representational qualities and impacted upon the display space, but also drew attention to skill and the ability of textiles to enter into early modern debates about mimesis and a kind of material ekphrasis (a vivid description of an artwork in a different, usually literary, medium). Certain elements were repeated across several different pieces and narratives, presumably representing particular kinds of challenges to the skills of their makers. One of the most striking was the representation of water, in fountains and pools in fantastical élite gardens, lakes in the Garden of Eden, and in the well in the biblical scene of Rebecca and Eliezer.[22] Whilst the interest in treating something essentially ephemeral was consistent, each piece displayed a different way of rendering the shapes and patterns of the surface of the water in stitching. The interplay between a visual representation that aimed to mimic the qualities of natural water and the production of a surface whose striking colours and textures drew the eye into itself, rather than gesturing beyond the artefact to the natural world which was its model, is striking. The precocious materiality of this work, probably undertaken by women in a domestic context, celebrated pushing the boundaries of two dimensions; making things real in their physical presence for the viewer by intruding into the space of the room (Figs 3 and 4).

Two 'object lessons' in this special issue build further on these insights: Claire Canavan's article presents a case study of a mid- to late seventeenth-century embroidery. It considers how viewers' attention was directed by the application of materials, textures and stitches, examining tensions between modes of viewing concerned with narrative, individual motifs, material content, skill and realism, and how these various forms of attention would have complemented or competed with one another, appealing to different viewers in different

Fig. 3.   Embroidered Mermaid (detail), anonymous, British, embroidered picture: 'The Proclamation of Solomon', mid-seventeenth century, 35.4 cm x 47.5 cm, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1947.191.313.
Published with permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Photograph: The Authors.

FIG. 4. Anonymous, British, embroidered picture: 'The Temptation of Adam and Eve', mid-seventeenth century, 57 cm x 58.5 cm, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1947.191.308. *Published with permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Photograph: The Authors.*

contexts. Finally, it considers how technical and material similarities with other embroideries may have encouraged viewers to consider the details of this individual piece in dialogue with a larger body of works.

Amanda Pullan's object lesson shows how a seventeenth-century cabinet embroidered with biblical scenes can be read for the needleworker's perspective on specific themes that were of concern to her. Starting from the premise that knowledge informs seeing, Pullan considers what knowledge the maker may have possessed in producing this work and how the combination of images can be read as representative not only of popular topics in printed sources but also of individual choices in subject and design. In doing so, she demonstrates a more informed way of reading this object as an important aspect of female education and expression.

These questions of experience and perception are heavily dependent on condition. The Milton Manor cabinet is in excellent condition, but there are often considerable differences between the current state of surviving objects and their original state (including the quality of their colour, texture and surface) which alter the movement of the eye around and between them. The work undertaken at Historic Royal Palaces on the 'virtual restoration' of historic tapestries at Hampton Court Palace using tiny beams of specially calibrated light to show the fine wool and silk threads in their original colours, apparently 'startled' and 'surprised' visitors by recreating the vibrant original colour of Henry VIII's set of Abraham tapestries. That an approximation of the original colour should startle and surprise at all reminds us of the discrepancy between what early modern people saw and the eroded relics that can often be seen today.[23]

This disjunction is explored further in Mary Brooks's piece in this special issue. In this article she addresses the ways in which textiles have slipped down the hierarchy of decorative art objects, partly because of modern perceptions of mass-produced fabrics, partly because of their dual aesthetic and functional roles and partly because, if not properly cared for, their condition degrades so that they become 'faded, dingy, holey, unstable, "unworthy" echoes of their former selves'. Brooks explores the curious invisibility of professional and domestic textiles in the writing on and display of historic interiors, and looks at the impact

that degradation has on how they are perceived today in terms of understanding the original value and impact of their colour, texture and lustre. She sheds light on changes in levels of acceptance among visitors of the impact of time on textiles in historic houses open to the public and considers their responses to conserved and unconserved textiles, together with some of the preservation and interpretation strategies being used to make such textiles worthy of observation once more.

A concern with the balance between preservation and close looking is also at the heart of Dinah Eastop's research note, in this case addressing new ways of engaging with textiles and other designed objects using digital technologies. Eastop explores a recurring theme in this special issue, the impact of lighting on how viewers encounter and engage with textured surfaces, although, in this innovative project between The National Archives and the University of Southampton, the lighting is virtual and manipulable in order to augment the viewing experience of 'reproduced' textile objects. Using a technique called Polynomial Texture Mapping (PTM), the project made materials from the Board of Trade Representations and Registers of Designs, 1839–1991, available online in digital form but with additional features to allow the user to 'relight' the on-screen 'object', thus conveying the three-dimensional, textured surfaces of designs. This technology to capture and convey texture could facilitate close, sustained inspection of objects and surfaces, but in virtual form to help balance the pressures of care and access in modern museum practice.

SPACES FOR VIEWING

A second major area of concern in this special issue is the specific visual context in which domestic textiles were intended to be viewed: we develop ways of analysing how a given space influences visual perception, experience and strategies for viewing. Exploring the contribution domestic textiles made to the household as *environment*, we take the rooms in which they were used as our category of analysis and consider the influences on object-space interaction, balancing the interest in detailed analysis of small textile objects with examination of much larger pieces, such as wall and bed hangings.

A key aspect of analysis is the distance at which viewing might optimally take place. A collaborative project with the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Sussex (in which relocated buildings are displayed on site) and textile designer Melissa White of Fairlyte Elizabethan Decoration allowed insights into the impact of a large-scale painted cloth which the museum had commissioned within the generous space of the open hall in their 'Bayleaf Farmhouse'. This central space of the hall in such houses had a 'lower' and an 'upper' end, a division of space indicated and shaped by various visual clues. The 'upper' end was marked out by the presence of important furniture and furnishings, as well as the use of decorative timber framing such as the moulded dais beams from which painted cloths could have been hung. It therefore offers an appropriate space within which to observe the function of this scale of domestic textile (Fig. 5).

Due to the lack of surviving painted wall hangings from the first half of the sixteenth century (despite their known popularity), the design of the new cloth commissioned by the museum is based on a wall painting from early sixteenth-century Althrey Hall in Wrexham, which shares sufficient similarities with another set of wall paintings at 18 High Street, Halstead, Essex, to suggest a common source.[24] The scheme is of bold alternate stripes, one featuring a pomegranate motif and one featuring rosettes in a diamond trellis. Melissa

Fig. 5. Replica painted hanging in the hall of Bayleaf Farmhouse (c. 1540), Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Sussex, as viewed in natural (day)light, July 2014.
Courtesy of Weald & Downland Open Air Museum. Photograph: The Authors.

White explored the creation of the original design with authentic pigments and processes, through a close analysis of the form and layering of the brushstrokes, which led to conclusions about the order and speed with which individual elements were painted (for example, different thicknesses of white paint used to create distinct effects such as delicate feathering or stronger borders).

Working with a contemporary artist, sensitive to the original processes of production of such schemes and to the way they attract the eye, makes it possible to assess the changing impact of this kind of textile at different distances. The speed and style of painting — the antithesis of work on detailed textiles such as embroidery — was intended to create a particular effect from a reasonable distance in a large space which was heavily socially stratified. The textile scheme can be seen to have played an important part in that stratification. The impact of its scale and colour were greatest at the point where the space of guest and host met around the central fire, suggesting an important role for such textiles in the rituals around dining and hospitality associated with the kind of substantial yeomen who inhabited houses like Bayleaf.

A questionnaire completed by visitors to the house in the days following the installation of the cloth indicated that there was a significant reaction to it, with sixty-eight per cent of those questioned rating the strength of its impact on their experience of the room at between 8/10 and 10/10.[25] The most common word used by respondents about the colours of the cloth was 'vibrant', and more detailed considerations of how this brightness worked included the assertion that it was a '3D effect', or a 'trompe l'oeil', and that 'the yellow and red makes it pop out as soon as you walk in'.

As the cloth naturally attracted attention through the contrast between its colours and the large dark space around it, blackened by soot from the fire and largely unlit by any of the light sources, so it was seen to alter the spatial dynamics of Bayleaf's hall. Several visitors commented on its scale and its dominance despite, in one case, an awareness of its 'relatively small size in relation to the room'. Three visitors felt it made the room feel smaller, and one that it produced the opposite effect — 'the room feels bigger'. The majority of comments, however, highlighted the way it shaped visitors' ways of seeing the hall: they identified, for instance, 'the way it marked out and emphasised that part of the room'; that it 'provides focus', or 'changes the focus'.[26] Other comments included the idea that 'the

cloth enriches the space and actually works to highlight other things, such as the firepit in the floor', indicating how one dominant object can change the way the eye moves around and between other items.[27]

Finally, visitors to Bayleaf associated these changes in focus and perspective with the social meanings of the hall. Many commented that it 'brings the hall to life' or 'animates' it; or more specifically that it made it feel inhabited, 'makes / helps me to believe that people lived here', or 'enhances [a] sense of historical dwelling'. This was explicitly contrasted against 'the neutral museum feeling'. With the cloth, the hall became a 'personal space', 'even more authentic' because 'lived in', or 'more human, less remote'.[28] In other words, visitors felt that the textile modified the space from museum to home, associating it with evidence of habitation — in one telling comment, it 'produces [a] feeling of domesticity'. They also took the next logical step and began to place the people who might have used such a cloth socially: the consensus of opinion was that it 'adds an air of affluence and grandeur', or makes it 'more classy'. The hall was referred to (following the museum's official interpretation of the house) as a 'higher status room in a family home where they entertain', and the cloth was said to 'formalise' the room, or to have 'elevated my thought about the inhabitants' status'.[29] Modern interest in interior design may well have sustained the close relationship between textiles and domesticity, and visitors appeared to view this painted cloth as symbolic of social interactions because of its role in translating space into habitation.

The installation of the cloth also provided an opportunity to test the consequences of different types and levels of light on the impact of textiles in domestic spaces. The two-bay open hall is lit by double-height unglazed windows facing roughly north-east and south-west which fill the centre of the high end bay, and by the fire of the central hearth and the candles lit at dusk on the table. These general and specific light sources have a significant effect on the quality and intensity of the colour and design of objects around the table, intensifying one of the effects visitors noted during the daytime. The way in which the painted cloth took and reflected light at dusk was especially impressive, as the fire and candle light made it appear to glow with incandescent colour (Fig. 6).

This effect is likely to have been caused partly by the glittering of the rabbit skin glue in the paint. The gelatine in the glue crystallises when dry, causing sparkling effects in the kinds of heavily angled light which set off reflective surfaces. Further effects may be caused by the metal ore in the pigments and the depth of the colours. This appearance of incandescence increases the visual impact of the cloth substantially and has the effect of separating it from the other objects in the interior, such as the wooden furniture and the tableware which became duller and faded into the background as the natural light died.[30] This kind of dynamic, flexible understanding of the changes in perception caused by human movement within space and the shifting colours and levels of light make it possible to analyse the lived experience of domestic textiles in a much more nuanced way.

The different kinds of attention it was possible to pay to such objects in a 'real world' context where there are other demands on the space and on attention is also at the heart of the concluding article in this special issue, jointly written by this introduction's authors and psychologists Ben Tatler and Ross Macdonald, based on an eye-tracking experiment in Queen Margaret's Chamber at Owlpen Manor in Gloucestershire, a room decorated with a unique scheme of early eighteenth-century painted cloths with expansive landscape imagery including scenes from the biblical story of Joseph.[31] Similar to the cloth hung at Bayleaf in

FIG. 6.   Replica painted hanging in the hall of Bayleaf Farmhouse (c. 1540), Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Sussex, as viewed in the evening by fire and candlelight, July 2014.
Courtesy of Weald & Downland Open Air Museum. Photograph: The Authors.

its method of manufacture — both were painted with a mixture of pigment and glue size — this decorative scheme has a very different effect because it stretches all the way round the room, covering every part of the walls, rather than drawing attention to one key part of it. Unlike either the Bayleaf cloth or the Hampton Court tapestries, Owlpen's cloths are fixed to the walls on every side and are therefore not readily moveable. The experiment enabled us to understand the strategies for seeing employed in relation to the narrative qualities of textiles, offering information about the way perception influenced the comprehension of narrative information on a flat surface, but one in a domestic setting where it was in dialogue with other objects (some of which obscured elements of the scene), and where the viewer was moving in relation to it. In addition to advancing our understanding of the operation of textiles in domestic spaces, this work has also expanded the data available to psychologists on viewing practices in real-world situations.

This collaborative paper outlines the experiment, which involved fourteen participants divided into two groups (the first comprising seven individuals with prior knowledge about painted cloths and/or historic textiles, the second seven individuals who had no prior knowledge of painted cloths or historic textiles). Once equipped with mobile eye-tracking equipment, each individual was asked to view the room four times with a new piece of information presented before each viewing. Analysis of the eye-tracking data suggests that the nature of prior knowledge and/or specific pieces of information have a significant influence on whether and how people approach and engage with the material and narrative qualities of historic textiles and other objects within interiors (Fig. 7).

Questionnaires which the participants filled in after they had taken part in the experiment shed complementary qualitative light on how individuals view domestic spaces and how they process and reflect upon that information — the relationship between ways of seeing and memory. First, both groups were asked what they had noticed about the room. The non-expert group's answers showed an attempt to orientate themselves within the chamber in particular, but also within the house and surroundings more broadly. The majority of them mentioned the window and the view outside it, one specifically commenting that 'gazing out of the window put the room into context'. Although the eye-tracking analysis shows that they in fact spent very little time at all looking at these areas, those glances apparently provided a structure for subsequent engagement with the objects in the room.

Fig. 7.   View at threshold of Queen Margaret's Chamber, Owlpen Manor, Gloucestershire, with the painted cloths visible on far wall, early eighteenth century. *Courtesy of Sir Nicholas Mander. Photograph: The Authors.*

Their responses also showed evidence of a need to structure their visual memories into some kind of order. They either wrote down their recollections of observations sequentially, 'first the bed, then the staged placement of various objects around the room …', or they organised memories of things noticed hierarchically in relation to the size of the object or the different categories of goods it contained: several responses moved from the bed or the wall hangings to the smaller things on show such as the doll, the hats or the shoes. This strategy for making sense of the different elements of the interior in order to interpret it as a whole suggests a desire to understand furnishings as a group, and to see them as in some way an aesthetic whole — a system of objects — that reflects upon their owner's identity. The movement of the eye across textile surfaces, therefore, might be seen as a summary process which aims to find common ground and a logic to the connections between things.

This way of seeing is linked to a further aspect of these answers that centres on an old pair of shoes (perhaps dating to the nineteenth century) which drew repeated mentions. Placed under the bed (they are visible in Fig. 7), the shoes drew attention as part of the non-expert participants' attempts to understand the kind of space they were entering and therefore to define the sort of social interaction invited, given that they had not been given any information about the property or the nature of the experiment. They commented on the deliberate placement of the shoes and other objects and their staging, or the fact that there were 'artefacts on display' — in other words, that this was partly a museum setting and partly a private domestic space; the eclecticism of their display was in some measure defined by the taste of the owners rather than the 'date' to which the room was interpreted, and it was the type and placing of personal objects from which individuals read that information. Like the visitors to Bayleaf, they explored connections between museums and houses as lived spaces.

Asked what they noticed about the room, the 'expert' group, on the other hand, focused almost exclusively on the painted cloths, reading the space much more straightforwardly, or perhaps explicitly, as a heritage one and therefore aiming to describe and position the textiles within it. They commented on the extent to which the cloths covered the walls and on their rarity. This set of responses seemed less likely to react to the room as an environment, and more as a space for display of textile objects whose worth they understood and which therefore influenced their ways of seeing.

Fig. 8.   View of the painted cloths on one of the walls of Queen Margaret's Chamber, Owlpen Manor, Gloucestershire, early eighteenth century.
Courtesy of Sir Nicholas Mander. Photograph: The Authors.

When asked 'What was the most striking thing about the hangings, and why?', the 'non expert' group mentioned the vibrancy of the colour, especially in relation to the foliage. They also registered their surprise about the hangings, expressing an inability to place a form of textile decoration that was 'quite foreign to the tapestries or wallpaper I'm used to seeing in historic properties', or 'quite unlike any I had seen before'. This suggests the significance of familiarity with aesthetic forms and the alienating qualities of new types of textiles. To a limited extent the 'non-expert' group picked up on the issue which preoccupied the 'expert' group, that is, the impact of the hangings on the atmosphere of the room as a whole. Whereas one participant from the former group said the cloths made the room feel smaller, several individuals in the latter talked about the hangings' complete coverage of the room, one mentioned 'the way they created a complete and intimate feel, a warmth', and another commented on the density of the foliage (Fig. 8).

There are clear connections here with the reactions of visitors to the new Bayleaf hanging and, taken together, these responses indicate that a key distinction between modern and early modern use of domestic textiles is their relationship to the structuring of rooms. We know that such textiles were considered by contemporaries to alter engagement with domestic space, and to make a significant contribution to the 'feel' of rooms. For instance, William Harrison, who discussed their social reach in the quote given above, also described how 'The walls of our houses on the inner sides in like sort be either hanged with tapestry, arras work, or painted cloths, wherein either divers histories, or herbs, beasts, knots, and suchlike are stained ... whereby the rooms are not a little commended, made warm, and much more close than otherwise they would be'.[32] The final section of this introductory article therefore considers a range of literary evidence which indicates contemporary connections between textile wall coverings and the qualities of room space and links them to specific changes taking place in early modern houses. It thus expands our understanding of ways of sensing or perceiving textiles.

Textiles and the Definition of Space

Harrison's word 'close' gets to the heart of the effect of early modern wall hangings on their viewers, and it is a word whose meanings were becoming inflected in very interesting

ways in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in relation to the household. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives its primary meaning as a 'closed or shut up state or condition, and its results', and it is intimately linked to the characteristics of domestic space as formed by the position of rooms within the house and the deployment of material objects.[33] These meanings must be seen in relation to the changing nature of room space created by the processes of the 'great rebuilding', as new kinds of chambers with lower ceilings became common across the social scale: considerably more time being spent, not in spaces like the hall at Bayleaf, but in enclosed chambers like Lady Puckering's (described at the head of this article) and the one at Owlpen.[34] The meanings of 'close' cross generic boundaries, and exploring their deployment across a range of early modern printed texts gives a sense of the cultural impact of the way domestic textiles functioned. For instance, the ecclesiastical historian John Strype records the taking of the 'martyr' Julius Palmer at Reading in 1571 when he was 'lodged in the closyst chambre in the howse, to wyt, in the Chambre beyond the Hall', from where he was nevertheless 'fetched owt' by the officers.[35] In Act III of Henry Shirley's *The Martyrd Souldier* (1638) Hubert's entry makes Bellizarius jump, the former mockingly pointing out that he is 'Affraid in a close roome, where no foe comes, / Unlesse it be a Weezle or a Rat'.[36] These rooms 'beyond' the main reception areas afforded a kind of seclusion, usually because they were at the rear or on the first floor of properties, furthest from either the street or the entry. As is clear from the Strype example in particular, the meanings of 'close' were at the heart of the period's ambivalence about privacy — Mr Palmer was hiding there — and the association of textiles with these meanings is key to understanding their function and significance.

The word 'close' related not only to the location of rooms, but also to their environmental conditions, a link made though the quality of air. In 1599, the naturalist Thomas Moffett advised on the husbandry of silkworms — 'Keepe them not in roomes too hot and close'[37] — and here the word functioned as the opposite of 'fresh'. Related meanings concentrated on the way houses were sealed from the elements: Francis Bacon, describing 'Experiments … touching the *Passage* and *Interceptions of sounds*' in his *Natural History* of 1626, pointed out that 'you must make the *Intercepting* Body very close; For *Sound* will passe throw a small Chincke', but that '*Hard*, or *Close*' bodies like walls tend to deaden and extinguish 'the *Sound* utterly' so that 'if you speake on the further side of a *Close Wall* … you shall not be heard'.[38] This association with walls can be seen again in the meaning 'dense or compact in texture or consistency' (or, as Samuel Johnson put it in his dictionary, 'without interstices or vacuities'):[39] Sir John Harington in his famous book on the first flushing toilet, insisted that the walls around his invention must be 'passing close plastered with good lyme and hayre, that no ayre come up from the vault'.[40] Such closings which left no openings at all were also a feature of the manufacture of domestic textiles, where the closeness of the weave of cloth and the paint and glue which filled spaces between warp and weft made a more solid protection against the passage of air and light in Bacon's terms.[41]

These meanings explore the negotiation of the space around individuals — there was a strand of definitions which focused on the closeness of men's hose to their legs, for instance — but also the relationships between them: the poet George Herbert, discussing the way the benefits of nature were distributed, described how God's creatures 'expresse a feast, / Where all the guests sit close, and nothing wants' — a proximity between the diners which articulates the satiety afforded by His hospitality, and the spiritual wonder of the infinite diversity of the natural world which nevertheless reveals one creator and purpose.[42] Mutual

proximity was also considered in relation to the seating of groups of people and the focus of their sitting in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* when Brutus, having just pledged Cassius to 'bury all unkindness' between them, welcomes two of their soldiers by suggesting: 'Now sit we close about this Taper here / And call in question our necessities'.[43] Theirs is a council of war whose urgency is tinged with the sadness of the announcement of Portia's death, and the closeness speaks to the political strength of their faction, their personal bonds and the focus on stage provided by the lit taper that signals night. These contemporary meanings offer valuable evidence for the association of textiles with the creation of a specific kind of early modern domestic atmosphere in which rooms with lower ceilings and hangings could be shut off from the rest of the house and the outside world, both warmed and intensified by the framing materials. The use of textile hangings shifted from drawing attention to particular parts of a room, as it did at Bayleaf, to enclosing and containing the whole.

Élite hanging textiles in particular — tapestries and arrases rather than the more common painted cloths which were fixed to the walls — were also often seen as taking on the negative qualities of closeness, however. The ability to hide things behind them which was a feature of their 'double-sidedness' allowed them to offer a kind of secrecy which made private interaction dangerously open to sin. Two literary tropes suggestive of this disparity between the appearance of the room and its reality were common throughout the period. One referred to the metaphorical ability of visually striking hangings to hide: just as 'All is not Gold that glistereth fayre, / Nor all thinges as it seemes to be', for instance, 'Fare hangings hide the dusty wall, / So doth the barke the hollow tree'.[44] Such images probed the disparity between buildings and their furnishings.

The other trope, shadier and often sexualised, refers to the visceral presence of unseen watchers hidden behind the cloths. Its most famous manifestation is probably in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where repeated concealments 'behind the arras' offer a material image of the disguises and frustrations of truth in which the play deals, eventually leading directly to Polonious's death and indirectly to Ophelia's suicide: when Polonius and the king hide there, the latter says that he has 'closely [here meaning secretly] sent for Hamlet hither', in order to watch him 'affront' Ophelia — as he puts it — 'seeing unseen'.[45] In a less serious vein, however, other early modern plays also take advantage of the consonance between the way the back of the stage was hung with cloths and the decoration of a contemporary interior.[46] In James Shirley's *The Constant Maid* (1640), for instance, the unsuitable suitor Startup invites Frances, the object of his affections, to 'Step behinde the hangings, and you may / Both hear and see …' her mother and her lover in conversation 'in the way of matrimony'. In Thomas Dekker's *Westward Ho!* (1607), Monopoly says scornfully to his fellow gallant Linstock, 'I ha not beene so often at Court, but I know what the back-side of the Hangings are made of'.[47]

In prose, the element of disguise was just as prevalent, showing that the association of such hangings with deceit was linked to élite interiors, rather than to the pragmatics of stagecraft. In narrative fiction, the scenes could be even more shocking, as they did not have to be embodied by an actor: 'Bee not angry Sir', says Fryer Bacon, the eponymous hero of an anonymous prose romance of 1627, as he demonstrates his magical arts by revealing a gentleman's secret lover: 'here is an old friend of yours … (with that hee pulled up the Hangings, and behind them stood a kitchin-Mayd with a basting-ladle in her hand)' — the shock of revelation hangs on the woman's enduring invisibility (she has been waiting there for three hours) and a stillness which renders her a part of the furniture. Similar tensions

around silence and stillness are more brutally explored in William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1584), when the cat narrator finally finds a way to reveal to his master the presence of his mistress's lover behind the cloths: 'sudainly I lept up & caught him by the genitalls with my teeth', at which point the husband, 'came to the cloth and lift it up and there he found this bare arst Gentleman strangling me [the cat], who had his stones in my mouth'.[48]

The potential trickery inherent in the way hanging cloths both were and were not part of the walls of rooms was also frequently said to extend to their artistic illusion. A widespread literary conceit, linked to the broader Renaissance concern with a creative skill that could mimic life so exactly as to confuse appearance and reality (explored above with embroideries), frequently showed hangings creating a domestic space that came alive with the nature they depicted. Against a marginal note reading 'Men may be deceived with out the slaunder of simplycitie', George Whetstone described the tapestries of 'Queene Aurelias' Chamber of Pleasures' thus:

> Yea a man might have beene indifferently wise enough, in other ordinarie matter, and yet have adventured to have gathered a Flower, or have plucked an Apple, in these hangings, and who so was best acquainted, could not wearie his eyes in the beholding of them: so that the very attyre of this Chamber walles, had an intertaining virtue.[49]

Such élite textiles were able, through the quality of their workmanship, to blur the boundaries between inside and outside, domestic and natural space, and part of the conceit was the paradoxically simultaneous 'closeness' and 'freshness' of the resultant atmosphere. Such textual responses to the totality of these hangings mirror modern reactions to their scale and coverage in interesting ways, although the early modern attitude was explicitly linked to concerns over the changing quality of household space.

These concerns about the physical, inter-personal and moral qualities of close atmospheres have parallels with the modern sense of private space and cosy or snug interiors, but they are also significantly different. An interview with Melissa White who, in addition to her work at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, has produced a version of the cloths at Owlpen Manor as a fabric and wallpaper design for interior design firm Zoffany, offers insights into the translation of early modern textiles into modern interiors. For that design, called Verdure, she removed the figures and therefore the narrative in order to make it 'neutral' and 'scenic', rather than narrative and didactic, putting an area of landscape into repeat in order to turn it into pattern.[50] This kind of passive background textile is an important departure from its more active early modern counterpart. A significant element of these hangings' original purpose was the moral meditation intended in response to biblical scenes and texts. In an extended example, the poet Christopher Lever imagined a young Princess Elizabeth regaining a regal sense of purpose through contemplation of the subject matter of the hangings which surrounded her at a low point in her fortunes.

> As thus her Griefe unrested had her Grace,
> To every place she casts her searching eie,
> Fearing some hidden danger in the place:
> Where in the hangings wrought, she did espie,
> How *Daniell* in the Lyons Denne did lie,
> Which counterfet of griefe she stands to see;
> Griefe is best pleasd with like societie...

> The Princesse on this object spends her sight,
> And freely spends it with intentive eie:
> The grieved doe in grieved things delight,
> And this well sorts with her extremitie.
> Heere is (she saith) a friendly company,
> We are not then alone, why grieve we thus?
> For *Daniel* and the Lyons be with us.[51]

A crucial element in this kind of critical viewing was the process of comparison made between the imagery in the textiles and the moral state in which viewer found him or herself. The princess ponders the connections:

> As I, so *Daniel* was of noble blood,
> Both I, and *Daniel* have like holy cause;
> As I my selfe, so *Daniel* hath withstood
> To yeelde obedience unto wicked Lawes;
> *Daniel* and I are envied both, because
> We give that honour to the King of heaven,
> Which others unto Images have given.[52]

A little later on, the author explains this process of sympathy between viewer and textile further: 'This apprehension of anothers griefe, / Doth somewhat ease the furie of her owne; / And she from *Daniel* can receive reliefe, / Because to him such favour God had showne'.[53] The process of empathy allows the transfer of assurance in divine intervention. Such an apprehension is made possible, however, only by the realism of the portrayal:

> The worke did well expresse the workemans Arte;
> For that which should have life did seeme to have it:
> He could no more then seeming life imparte,
> And that was done so well as Arte could have it,
> So exquisite the lustre that he gave it.
> The Artist had so much of Arte in giving,
> As she did feare the Lions had beene living.[54]

The tension between Elizabeth as Princess and as impressionable woman speaks to figurative textiles' capacity to excite the imagination in ways that could at times be worrying. In a chapter on 'an order and a dyete for them the whiche be madde [mad], and out of theyr wytte [wits]', Andrew Boorde, the physician and writer, advised that they be kept in 'some close howse or chamber, where there is lytell lyght'. In addition to removing knives and other edge tools (and strong beer), he suggested that the chamber should have 'no paynted clothes, nor paynted wallys, nor pyctures of man nor woman or fowle or beest: for suche thynges maketh them ful of fantasyes'.[55] These cloths were intended to engage the viewer's imagination through the illusionistic qualities of imagery and narrative much more actively than present-day 'backgrounds', however intense their colour and pattern — vividness had didactic and moral ends. Textiles were the most visually dominant aspect of domestic spaces whose nature was altering considerably across the early modern period (at different rates in

different parts of the country), from a preponderance of time spent in the expansive 'fresh' spaces of an open hall like Bayleaf to greater familiarity with lower-ceilinged 'close' rooms like those at Owlpen. In this different type of space which encouraged a new pattern of closer interaction, domestic textiles' visual imagery had an intense power to provoke the imagination. The cloths themselves were the focus of a contemporary perception that such spaces could be both comforting and confining; sources of ideals that shaped behaviour in their narrative imagery, but open to potentially negative connections with concealment and secrecy in their form. Domestic textiles physically shaped the early modern household, and at the same time conceptually fashioned responses to it.

Conclusion

This special issue — and the network from which it arose — encourages us to place historic decorative textiles that are more usually viewed in isolation and in the protective environments of museum displays and storerooms within material contexts where they are required to compete for attention. Such a move enables us to question and test various strategies for viewing and to consider further the relationship between modern and early modern ways of seeing. By repositioning textiles within domestic spaces and systems of objects, the articles in this issue encourage us to put pressure on our received assumptions about the nature of fabric items and how we respond to their visual, material and narrative qualities.

In this introductory article, we have argued for the importance of the relationships between objects, spaces and the way they were perceived by those moving, or pausing en route, through the household. These relationships influenced the nature of the encounter and interaction with textiles, as did the differences between viewing up close and at a distance, or across and between similar works; the distinctions between informed and uninformed viewing, and between viewing at different times of day with changing qualities of natural and artificial light. Attentiveness to 'ways of seeing' involves the recognition that the precise nature of the conditions for viewing is as important to record and analyse as the formal qualities of the objects viewed. In particular, we have explored textiles designed with a keen interest in the relationship between haptic, emotional and intellectual responses which connect individuals to their material environment, and argued for their central role in the creation of new kinds of early modern domestic space.

References
[1] M. Merry and C. Richardson eds, *The Household Account Book of Sir Thomas Puckering of Warwick, 1620: Living in London and the Midlands* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Dugdale Society, 2012), p. 307. While early modern spelling has been retained in unedited sources, the use of u/v and i/j has been silently

standardised throughout. This piece reads, in modern English: 'In my Lady's Chamber in the new buildings Item six pieces of tapestry hangings and a chimney piece containing about one hundred and four Flemish ells, two curtains and two rods for two windows, one French bedstead, one featherbed, two bolsters, three blankets, one plain white rug, a head cloth [cloth which hangs at the bed head], tester, double valence, counterpoint, foot valence of blew [blue] cloth laced and the valence fringed, a court cupboard and carpet suitable to [matching] the bed, a high chair with elbows and a low chair and a low stool suitable to the bed, a fire shovel and tongs, a pair of andirons tipped with brass, a pair of cobirons [irons to support a spit], a pair of bellows, a great trunk and one little trunk priced at £24 19s 4d'.

[2] W. Harrison, *The Description of England*, ed. Georges Edelen (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), p. 200.

[3] For recent work on textiles in the domestic interior, see N. Mander, 'Painted cloths: history, craftsmen and techniques', *Textile History*, XXVIII, no. 2 (1997), pp. 119–48; S. E. James, 'Domestic painted cloths in sixteenth-century England: imagery, placement, and ownership', in R. Netherton and G. R. Owen-Crocker eds, *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, IX (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), especially pp. 149–51 on the wide scope of ownership of textiles. Details of individual textile objects and their popularity relative to other household items can be found in the wealth of printed probate inventories for English counties. See C. Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) for the sixteenth century and, for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, M. Overton, J. Whittle, D. Dean and A. Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600–1750* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[4] For further information, see University of Kent, Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior 1500–1700: The Case of Decorative Textiles (Online). Available from: http://www.kent.ac.uk/mems/domesticinterior.html [Accessed: 17 June 2015].

[5] On the relationship between religious stories depicted as large-scale domestic decoration and devotional behaviours within the household, see T. Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[6] As George Sandys puts it in his 'A Paraphrase Upon Job': 'worne like a cloth / Gnawne into rags by the devouring Moth', in G. Sandys, *A Paraphrase upon the Divine Poems* (London: John Legatt, 1638), p. 19.

[7] M. Ponsonby, 'Textiles and time: reactions to aged and conserved textiles in historic houses open to the public in England and the USA', *Textile History*, XXXXII, no. 2 (2011), pp. 200–19.

[8] M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[9] This distinction was first formulated in H. Foster ed., *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: New Press, 1988). A working definition of the term 'visuality' is provided in J. A. Walker and S. Chaplin, *Visual Culture: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 22.

[10] R. S. Nelson, 'Introduction', in R. S. Nelson ed., *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 2.

[11] See, for example, E. Bachta et al., Evaluating the Practical Applications of Eye Tracking in Museums (Online, 2012). Available from: http://www.museumsandtheweb.com/mw2012/papers/evaluating_the_practical_applications_of_eye_t and S. Filippini Fantoni et al, Capturing Visitors' Gazes: Three Eye Tracking Studies in Museums (Online, 2013). Available from: http://mw2013.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/capturing-visitors-gazes-three-eye-tracking-studies-in-museums/ [Both accessed: 17 June 2015]. Keith Rayner provides a summary of twentieth-century approaches to reading analysis in K. Rayner, 'Eye movements in reading and information processing: 20 years of research', *Psychological Bulletin*, CXXIV, no. 3 (1998), pp. 372–422. For recent developments, see J. Holsanova, 'New methods for studying visual communication and multimodal integration', *Visual Communication*, XI, no. 3 (2012), pp. 251–57, a special issue devoted to 'multimodal' analysis with methods including content and semiotic analysis and eye-tracking measurements. This work is largely based on the interpretation of page- or screen-based text, rather than narratives interpreted in three-dimensional space.

[12] M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); N. Cooper, *The Houses of the Gentry, 1480–1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); M. Howard, *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); M. Johnson, *English Houses, 1300–1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2010); J. Ayres, *Domestic Interiors, The British Tradition, 1500–1850* (New Haven: Yale University

Press, 2003); A. Wells-Cole, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Art and Decoration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

[13] R. Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[14] W. Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); N. Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*; L. Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

[15] L. Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendour: Society and Culture in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), M. O'Malley and E. Welch eds, *The Material Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); E. Campbell and S. Miller eds, *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400–1700* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

[16] K. Marko ed., *Textiles in Trust: Proceedings of the Symposium 'Textiles in Trust' held at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, September 1995* (London: Archetype Publications in association with the National Trust, 1997).

[17] M. M. Brooks, *English Embroideries of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Ashmolean Museum, 2004); M. Ajmar and F. Dennis eds, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: V&A Publications, 2007); T. Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty: Tapestries at the Tudor Court* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); T. Campbell ed., *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); A. Morrall and M. Watt eds, *English Embroidery in the Metropolitan Museum, 1575–1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[18] For instances of the former, see N. B. Harte and K. Ponting eds, *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1983); R. Davis, *English Overseas Trade, 1500–1700* (London: Macmillan, 1973); W.-R. Baumann, *The Merchants Adventurers and the Continental Cloth-Trade, 1560s–1620s* (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1990); N. B. Harte ed., *The New Draperies in the Low Countries and England 1300–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press and The Pasold Research Fund, 1997); for an instance of the latter, see D. Mitchell, '"My purple will be too sad for that melancholy room": furnishings for interiors in London and Paris, 1660–1735', *Textile History*, XL, no. 1 (2009), pp. 3–28.

[19] For the sixteenth-century increases in ownership of tablecloths, cupboard cloths, curtains, cushions and carpets, see Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*, especially chapter 2; for changes in the following centuries, see Overton, Whittle, Dean and Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households*.

[20] See, for example, H. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), especially chapter 6; J. Whittle and E. Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[21] See, for instance, L. Cowen Orlin, 'Three ways to be invisible in the Renaissance: sex, reputation, and stitchery', in P. Fumerton and S. Hunt eds, *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); S. Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[22] Genesis 24: 10–51.

[23] Kate Frame, Head of Conservation and Collection Care at Historic Royal Palaces, paper given at the final conference for the 'Ways of Seeing the English Domestic Interior, 1500–1700: The Case of Decorative Textiles' network, Geffrye Museum, September 2013. For details of the project, see Henry VIII's Tapestries Revealed (Online). Available at: http://www.hrp.org.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/collectionscare/vrtapestrieshamptoncourt [Accessed: 23 June 2015].

[24] K. Davies, *Artisan Art: Vernacular Wall Paintings in the Welsh Marches, 1550–1650* (Herefordshire: Logaston Press, 2008).

[25] Forty-three questionnaires were completed in the week following the installation of the cloth. The questionnaires elicited specific information on the effects of textiles within domestic space and individuals' responses to them, issues which are not often raised with visitors to historic properties. Questions included: 'What aspect of the cloth did you find most striking?', 'What effect do you think it has on the hall?' and 'What effect does the cloth have on your feelings about the room?'. The scale of the effect these responses registered indicates the particular significance of textile objects in the large, uncluttered spaces of an early sixteenth-century open hall, and provides an obvious contrast with the way visitors responded to the painted cloths in the chamber in Owlpen Manor, discussed below, a room in which many different types of textile and wooden patterned surfaces compete for attention with one another.

[26] Six visitors called it 'focal', one saying it 'provides a focal point to the room drawing the eyes towards the top table'.

[27] Or, 'Your attention is drawn to the hanging and the table in front'.

[28] It was also described as 'more habitable', 'more welcoming', 'homely', and made the room 'seem real — more personal to that family'.

[29] Additional comments: 'feels different — grander', or 'makes it feel more grand'; one visitor linked it to hospitality by saying that 'It gives a festive feeling, like there's a wedding'.

[30] An impression of this visual impact and the way it alters in the different light levels of a late medieval hall house can be gained through the time-lapse photography produced by Darren Maplethorpe, Senior Lecturer in Film and Media at the University of Chichester: Interior Decoration in Early Modern England (Online). Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUd_vBFlxs4 [Accessed: 17 June 2015].

[31] Genesis 37: 1–36.

[32] Harrison, *The Description of England*, p. 197.

[33] 'Close', *Oxford English Dictionary* (Online). Available from: http://www.oed.com/ [Accessed: 17 June 2015].

[34] The term 'great rebuilding' comes from an influential article by W. G. Hoskins, 'The rebuilding of rural England, 1570–1640', *Past & Present*, IV (1953), pp. 44–59. Subsequent scholars have refined Hoskins's account, arguing for a longer-term process or series of re-buildings, introducing important regional qualifications and pointing towards urban, as well as rural, development. See R. Machin, 'The great rebuilding: a reassessment', *Past & Present*, LXXVII, no. 1 (1977), pp. 33–56; C. Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England: Revolutions in Architectural Taste* (London: University of London College Press, 1994); Howard, *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England*; Johnson, *English Houses 1300–1800*.

[35] Quoted in J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials, Relating Chiefly to Religion, and the Reformation of It, and the Emergencies of the Church of England, Under King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary I*, III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), p. 431. See also, for example, W. Stafford, *A Compendious or Briefe Examination of Certayne Ordinary Complaints, of Divers of our Country Men in these our Dayes* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1581), 'The First Dialogue', fol. 3v, where a JP takes an 'honest husbandman' to sit 'downe in a close Parloure' of an inn to talk.

[36] H. Shirley, *The Martyrd Souldier* (London: I. Okes, 1638), sig. E3.

[37] T. Moffett, *The Silkewormes, and their Flies* (London: Nicholas Ling, 1599), p. 48.

[38] F. Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum; Or, A naturall Historie* (London: J. H. for W. Lee, 1626), p. 59.

[39] 'Close', *Oxford English Dictionary*, meaning 13a (Online). Available from: http://www.oed.com/ [Accessed: 17 June 2015], where the 'primary notion is that of having intervening space or spaces *closed* up, whereby the parts are *in immediate contact* with, or *near* to each other'.

[40] Sir J. Harington, *An Anatomie of the Metamorphosed Ajax* (London: Richard Field, 1596), sig. liiij.

[41] Closeness is also, of course, linked to the increased use of domestic glazing, which offered a much less 'fresh' environment. Close-shuts, or windows which close, are described by Gervase Markham as a part of good husbandry in 1615: 'close-shuts, or draw-windows to keep out the Frosts and Storms'. G. Markham, *A Way to Get Wealth* (London: John Streater for George Sawbridge, 1668), p. 156, referring to their value for malt making.

[42] G. Herbert, 'Providence', in *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations* (Cambridge: T. Buck and R. Daniel, 1633), p. xxxiv. The word also expressed the curiously dual nature of creation which married otherwise disparate forms ('Frogs marry fish and flesh … Sponges, non-sense and sense').

[43] W. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, in R. Proudfoot, A. Thompson and D. Scott Kastan eds, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works, Revised Edition* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001), iv. iii. 162–63.

[44] 'A yong man finding her to whome he had plighted promise, to be fraught with another mans fruicte, wrighteth vnto her as followeth', from H. Chettle, *The Forrest of Fancy* (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1579), lines 760–63, sig. E ii. See also, for example, 'the dusty mouldred wall, / Where gaping riftes vnsemely syt / and wormes consuming crall', M. Palingenio Stellato, *The Zodiake of Life*, trans. B. Googe (London: Henry Denham, 1565), ll. 1140–42, sig. S2v.

[45] W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in Proudfoot, Thompson and Scott Kastan eds, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ll. 29–33.

[46] For more information on the decoration of the early modern stage, see J. Ronayne, 'Totus mundus agit histrionem: the interior decorative scheme of the Bankside Globe', in J. R. Mulryne and M. Shewring

eds, *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 121–46; F. Kiefer, 'Curtains on the Shakespearean stage', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, xx (2007), pp. 151–86; S. Dustagheer, 'Appendix: list of plays performed at indoor playhouses, 1575–1642', in A. Gurr and F. Karim-Cooper eds, *Moving Shakespeare Indoors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 252–59.

[47] J. Shirley, *The Constant Maid, A Comedy* (London: I. Raworth, for R. Whitaker, 1640), sig. D2; T. Dekker and J. Webster, *Westward Ho!* (London: William Jaggard, 1607), sig. H.

[48] Anon., *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon* (London: G. Purslowe for F. Grove, 1627), sig. B1–v; W. Baldwin, *A Marvellous History Intitulede, Beware the Cat* (London: Edward Allde, 1584), not paginated.

[49] G. Whetstone, from *An Heptameron of Ciuill Discourses* (London: Richard Jones, 1582), p. 99. See also, for instance, J. Yver, *A Courtlie controuersie of Cupids Cautels*, trans. H. Wotton (London: Francis Coldock and Henry Bynneman, 1578), sig. Iiij; G. de Salluste Du Bartas, *Du Bartas: His Divine Weekes And Workes*, trans. J. Sylvester (London: Humphray Lownes, 1621), ll. 1774–85; R. Bellings, *A Sixth Booke to the Covntesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (London: Printed by the Societie of Stationers, 1624), sig. B3.

[50] Personal communication, Melissa White, Fairlyte Elizabethan Decoration, May 2014, interview.

[51] C. Lever, *Queene Elizabeths Teares or, Her Resolute Bearing the Christian Crosse, Inflicted on her by the Persecuting Hands of Steven Gardner, Bishop of Winchester, in the Bloodie Time of Queene Marie* (London: V. S. for Mathew Lownes, 1607), ll. 1079–141.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] A. Boorde, *A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Helth* (London: Robert Wyre, 1542), chapter 37.

CATHERINE RICHARDSON is Reader in Renaissance Studies at the University of Kent. She studies the literature and history of early modern material culture, and has written books on *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England* (Manchester University Press, 2006), *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2011) and, with Tara Hamling, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England, The Materiality of Domestic Life, 1500–1700* (Yale University Press, forthcoming, 2016).

TARA HAMLING is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Birmingham. She is an art historian with a particular interest in the decorative arts and religious context of early modern Britain. She is author of *Decorating the Godly Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (Yale University Press, 2010) and editor (with Richard L. Williams) of *Art Re-formed: Reassessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) and (with Catherine Richardson) of *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (2010).