



Keynote Speaker 2011 Conference,  
Professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Harvard University

## Reflections on the May 2011 Conference – Material Culture, Craft & Community

The Material Culture Institute hosted its first two-day international conference in May 2011, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The conference drew speakers from around the world. Speakers and registrants assembled to discuss the complexities of craft and community as these evolved in various regions and time periods. About two hundred people participated in this event, with a keynote address from Harvard Professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich to cap the Friday sessions, followed by a public reception. The talents of a new generation of scholars were showcased in a graduate plenary session that opened the Saturday events, with three PhD candidates speaking: Alena M. Buis, Queen's University; Susan Cahill, Queen's University; and Anne DeStecher, Carleton University.

The very broad range of presentations included significant research on Canadian indigenous craft traditions. The important issue of indigenous craft cultures was also addressed by scholars from New Zealand and the United States who reflected on the role of these crafts in local communities and wider social contexts. Participants enjoyed the richly interdisciplinary range of speakers and the conversation that reverberated during breaks suggested that everyone relished the opportunity to discuss and network. The exhibition "Fashioning Feathers: Dead Birds, Millinery Craft & the Plumage Trade" introduced other material and thematic elements to the conference. The exhibition was hosted at the FAB Gallery at the University of Alberta in May/June 2011. Merle Patchett and Liz Gomez, co-curators, explored the historic and current uses and representations of feathers in fashion, as well as the environmental costs of this traffic. Contemporary artists' works offered intriguing insights into human relationships with birds as decorative object. This exhibition will re-open at the Royal Alberta Museum in winter 2012. <http://fashioningfeathers.com/>



Conference organizer and plenary graduate speakers: (left to right) Beverly Lemire, Alena Buis, Susan Cahill and Anne DeStecher

# MATERIALITY & INDEPENDENCE

DISABILITY, ABILITY & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## Material Culture Institute

### Spring Symposium 2012

The New Year brings another symposium into view. The spring 2012 symposium will be a one-day affair on 4 May 2012, addressing "Materiality & Independence: Disability, Ability & the Built Environment". This event, spearheaded by Megan Strickfaden (Department of Human Ecology) includes a fascinating group of speakers who will address topics such as the accessibility of museums and galleries, and the material culture of disability within global environments. The symposium will conclude with a roundtable panel, encouraging a wide-ranging exchange on the critical questions raised at this event.

Registration will begin in early April, \$35 regular, \$20 student / unwaged. The event will be held at the Telus Centre, 111<sup>th</sup> Street and 87<sup>th</sup> Avenue, University of Alberta. We hope to see you there.

### Exhibition of Photography by the Visually Impaired

Megan Strickfaden and Cindy Couldwell are co-curating an innovative exhibition to be held in conjunction with the Spring Symposium, showcasing the works of visually impaired photographers. The Rutherford Library South will host this exhibition, which will run from 3 to 27 May 2012. The exhibit is yet to be titled, but will feature photographers from the University of Alberta and CNIB clients across Alberta. An opening reception that is free to the public will be held on the evening of 3 May 2012.

### New Perspectives on Western Canadian Women's History

Dr. Laurie Bertram will be curating the exhibition: "PIONEER LADIES [of the evening]: A commemorative landscape for women on the margins in Western Canada, 1879-1916." Laurie Bertram is currently the Grant Notley Memorial Postdoctoral Fellow, in the Department of History & Classics at the University of Alberta. This exhibition will combine unique early 20<sup>th</sup> century photographs, as well as selected objects from the Department of Human Ecology's Clothing and Textiles Collection, to explore a generation of marginalized women in the Canadian West. These "Pioneer Ladies" are not often celebrated and their history is too often ignored. This timely exhibition will run from 15 September – 15 November 2012 in the Human Ecology Building Lobby Gallery.