

Polly Smith's Library

Processing the Books of Jim Henson's Costumer Designer at the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library

Lottie Segal

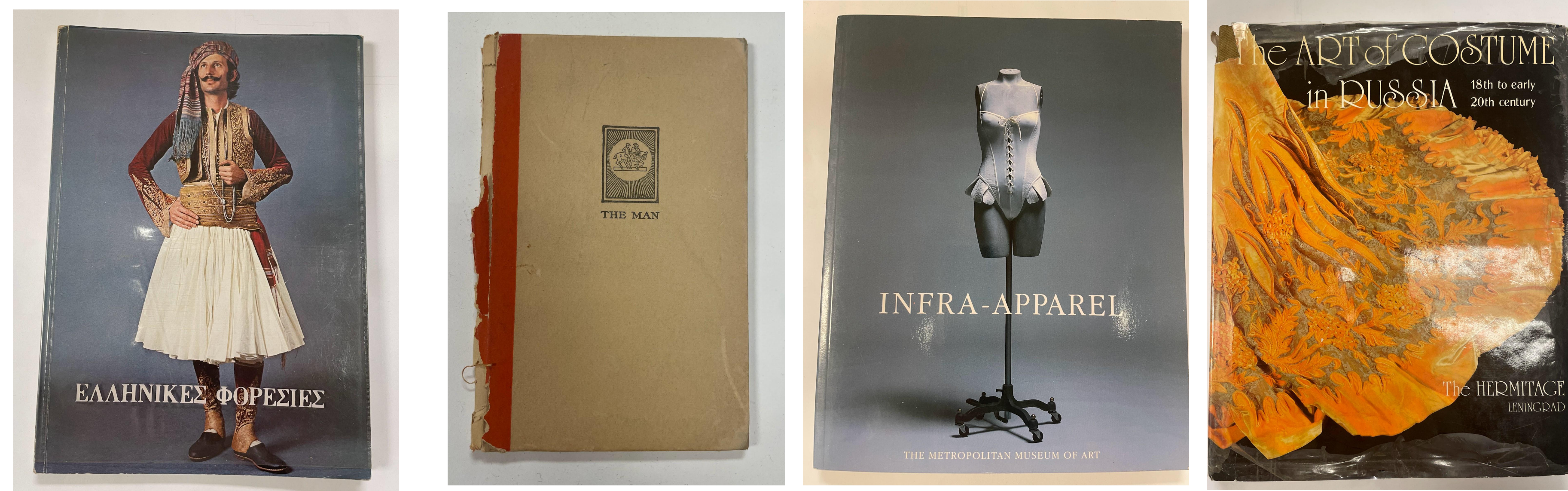
About Polly Smith

Polly Smith is a costume designer who worked with the Jim Henson Company beginning in 1978. She worked on such projects as *The Muppet Show*, *Sesame Street*, *The Dark Crystal*, *Muppet Treasure Island*, and *Muppets Wizard of Oz*. She has won three Emmys for her work on *Sesame Street*. In 2022 she was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame for being a co-inventor of the sports bra.

Contents of the Collection

- 41 boxes of books and papers relating to her work with Jim Henson. The papers, known as the Polly Smith collection on Jim Henson, are available at Special Collections in the Performing Arts.
- Late 1800s to modern publications.
- in a variety of languages including English, German, Italian, French, Japanese, Chinese, Greek, Russian, and more.
- Coffee table books, how to guides, reproductions of historical patterns, exhibition guides, catalogues, history books, children's books and more.
- Including topics such as historical clothing, womenswear, menswear, cultural dress, alternative fashion, accessories, undergarments, embellishments, pirates, rock stars, science fiction, Barbie, Hollywood, mythology, and more.

Gems of the Collection



An assortment of books showcasing the breadth of the collection

Processing the Collection

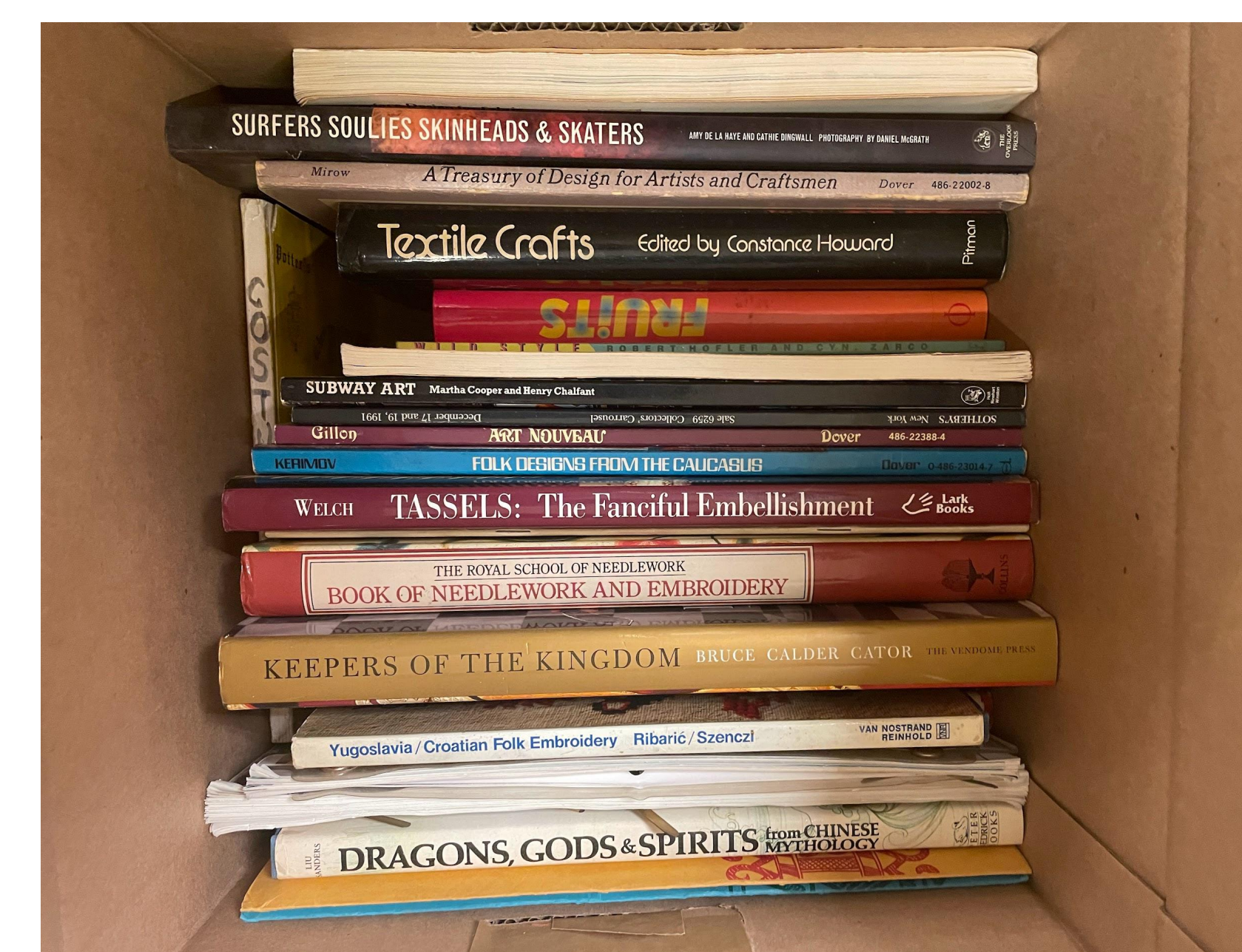
1. Assess the contents of each box by deciding which books are within the scope of the collection and which are not.
2. Pull out and set aside any books with preservation concerns.
3. Mark on inventory sheet if books are going to be kept for the general collection, sent to Special Collections in the Performing Arts, set aside for preservation, or out of scope.
4. When all the books have been assessed, the box is marked with a sticky note to indicate it is completed.
5. After all boxes have been completed, use the inventory to check which books are already in UMD Libraries and which are not by search UMD's catalog.

Challenges

- Many of the books are just on the edge of the library's scope. For example, film is out of scope but a book on film costume might be relevant.
- Older books are falling apart and must be handled with care.
- Magazines and catalogues are also falling apart.
- Books not in English have to be translated, which adds time to the project.
- Physical space in the processing area is limited.

Next Steps

- Continuing checking to see if books are in UMD Libraries.
- Offer out of scope books to costume design students.
- Create a bookplate reading "From the Library of Polly Smith" to add to the front cover of books.
- Accession books into the collection.
- Create exhibit highlight the Polly Smith collection on Jim Henson and the books she donated.



Boxes lined up and their contents