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tel 212-744-1352
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info@coraginsburg.com

EMBROIDERED PICTURE English, 1690–1700

With its rhythmically twisting floral branches and skillfully rendered lion and camel, this small embroidery represents the art of needlework in a transitional moment in England. Throughout the seventeenth century, pictorial domestic embroideries depicted a narrowly defined canon of biblical and mythological narrative scenes executed mainly in tent stitch or in raised work. From the 1680s, however, embroiderers began to experiment with a new, secular, pictorial design vocabulary that embraced the asymmetry and fanciful florals of imported Indian textiles. Embroideries also began to incorporate techniques such as queen stitch to add subtle texture to pictures that became increasingly perspectival. In the eighteenth century, these factors produced two varieties of characteristically English embroideries: the colorful crewel work bed furnishings covered with swirling exotic flora, and the more subdued and naïve embroideries in the pastoral vein. This embroidery anticipates these two genres.

Possibly created to adorn the lid of a type of square wooden box popular in the 1690s, this embroidery mixes traditional elements such as the paired animals – the lion is a symbol of English monarchy – with large-scale exotic blossoms influenced by Eastern designs. Queen stitch, a technique that involves pulling and securing long stitches to the side to create a central reserve, is found on some Stuart-era embroideries, but was more frequently employed toward the end of the seventeenth century. Here, the hilly mounds are wrought partially in queen stitch in shaded tones of brown, blue, and green. From these hillocks, two intertwining floral branches support three improbably large flowers and idiosyncratically colored berries, complemented by a variety of curling and shaded leaves. At the center is a six-petalled red rose around which the entire composition revolves, flanked by a camel and a seated lion.

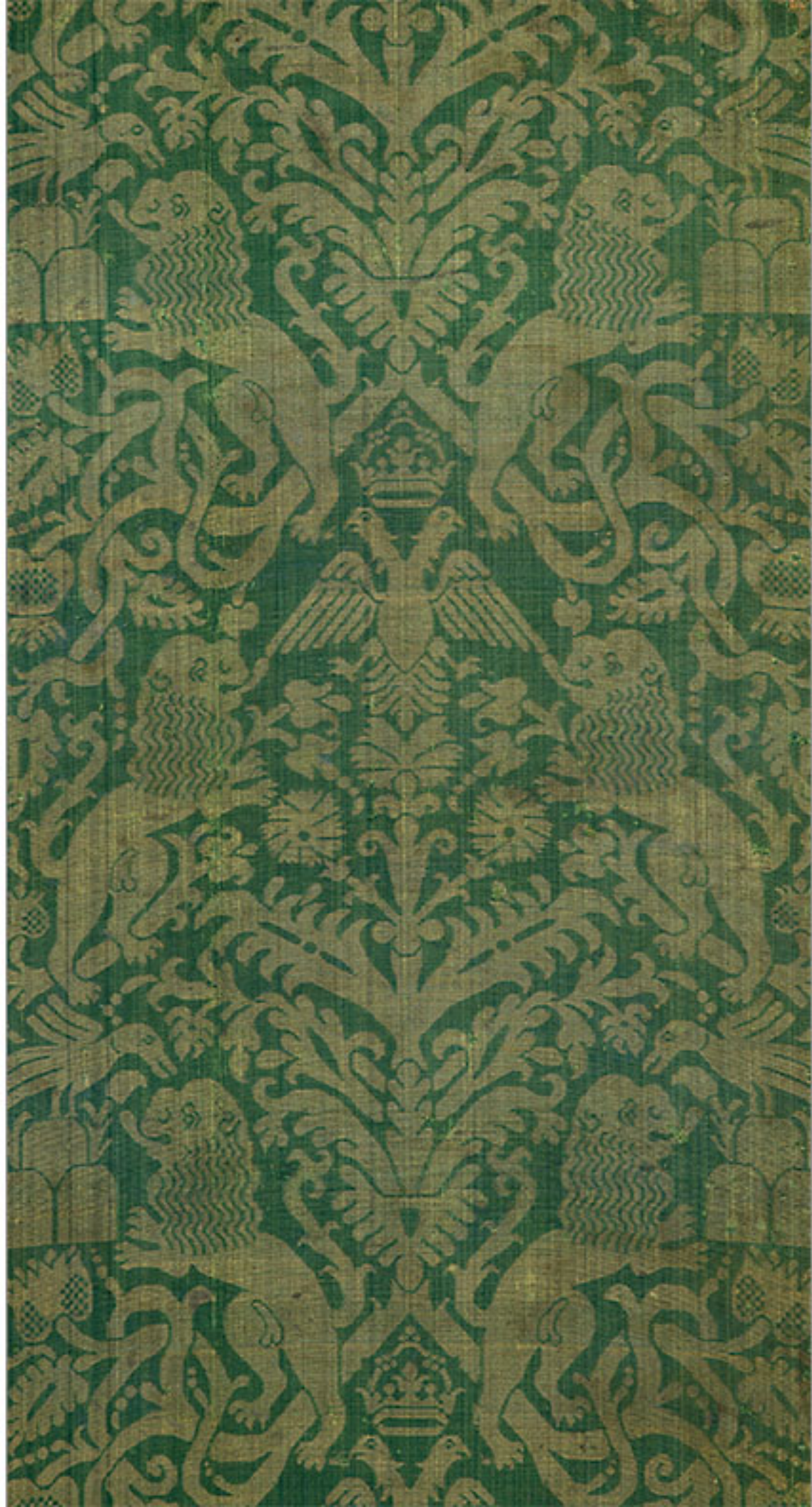
Both animals may derive from an anonymous print inserted in Peter Stent's 1661 *Therd Book of Flowers* (see Peter Stent, *London Printseller, circa 1642–1665*, Alexander V. Globe, [1985], pl. 159, p. 115). The camel is also similar to an image designed by Wenceslaus Hollar and engraved by David Loggan that Stent published in 1662 (see British Museum, 1875,0710.770 and 1858,0417.1045).

The central floral stems, evoking a tree of life motif, demonstrate a distinctive *mélange* of English and Indian pictorial traditions. They are late iterations of the rigidly symmetrical floral stems that decorate sweet meat bags and book bindings of the first half of the seventeenth century. In these embroideries, flowers often dwarf the birds and animals, as can also be seen in many of Stent's plates. The colorful blossoms on imported painted Indian palampores, however, influenced the form, colors, and asymmetry of the flowers that appear here.

A surviving box with its embroidered queen stitch panels shows how pictures of this type would have been used in the seventeenth century (Victoria and Albert Museum, T.6-1926), though the pristine colors and unadhered back of this piece indicate that it was never made up. A small group of similar embroideries of roughly the same dimensions, all with intertwining flowering stems or branches and the selective use of queen stitch on the same distinctive ground, has been identified in private collections, suggesting that these may all be the product of a single school. One example features a lion, a leopard, and a parrot, along with an exotic red flower that is very similar to the one that appears in the upper right corner of this embroidery (see *Art of Embroidery*, Lanto Synge, 2001, cover, p. 197).

9" H x 8.5" W





WOVEN SILK WITH HERALDIC MOTIFS Italian, ca. 1600–50

The extensive use of gilt threads and heraldic motifs featured in this silk were intended to reflect the glory of its illustrious patron. Woven as a single lampas bound in plain weave, the patterning is achieved by a supplementary yellow silk weft that highlights a parallel strip of gilt silver, here surviving largely intact. The metallic strips continue on the back of the textile so that the piece is completely reversible, though in the negative, suggesting that it may have been viewed from both sides, possibly as part of room hangings. The panel relates to a group of nearly identical fabrics woven in red silk, attributed to Italian or Spanish manufacture and dated to the sixteenth or seventeenth century. This textile, the only known example woven in green, sheds light on the group of red silks, while offering intriguing mysteries of its own.

In April 1920, the renowned Italian collector and dealer Raoul Tolentino sold his collection at the American Art Galleries in New York. Among the most impressive of the numerous textiles in the sale was lot 709, described as a group of “Florentine silk and gold brocade hangings and borders” dating to the sixteenth century. Most notable of all was the size of the lot: some 63 yards of material, a remarkable quantity that likely represented the wall hangings and the bed furnishings from an important Baroque furnishing scheme. In the seventeenth century, silk hangings with vertical “candelabra” patterns often adorned the walls of rooms in European palaces. Today, fragments from this group are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1971.240, 1972.66.1a-c, 1972.66.6), the Art Institute of Chicago (1973.308), the Denver Art Museum (1972.131ab), and the Musée du Cinquanteenaire in Brussels (see *Catalogue d’Etoffes Anciennes et Modernes*, 3rd ed., Isabella Errera, [1927], no. 305A, p. 268.).

Although identical in weave structure and overall pattern to the red examples, the configuration of the pattern here has been shifted so that the double-headed crowned eagles are placed at the center, rather than being split along the selvedges. In this way, the groups of three hillocks surmounted by birds appear separately at the edges of the textile rather than awkwardly joined at the center, as in the red silks.

The textiles in the Tolentino sale were said to feature the arms of the Chigi family, a banking dynasty in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that counted a pope (Alexander VII) among its members and whose coat of arms featured the device of six grouped mountain peaks. However, as is clear in this length, the device is meant to represent a single group of three hills, suggesting instead a possible connection with the Albani or Doria-Pamphilj-Landi families. The Albani family coat of arms included a group of three hillocks, and it is possible that this textile was woven for the use of Ora zio Albani (1576–1653), an ambassador to Rome who was made a senator by Pope Urban VIII in 1633. Alternatively, this silk may have been commissioned by a member of the joined Doria, Pamphilj and Landi families, who intermarried in the seventeenth century. As princes of the Holy Roman Empire, the Landi were entitled to bear the imperial double-headed eagle, and the combined Doria-Landi arms contained this symbol, which may account for its appearance here, topped by a crown. The personal symbol of the Pamphilj (who married into the Doria-Landi family in 1671) was the dove of peace with an olive branch in its beak. Although the birds that top the *monti* in this textile do not bear these branches, they may allude to the family device. The ripe pomegranates with bursting seeds (here rendered as a check pattern) convey fecundity, and therefore would have been appropriate to a textile commissioned to celebrate a fruitful marriage.

79” H x 22.25” W (detail shown)

BEADWORK BASKET

English, ca. 1660–65

The elaborately beaded baskets produced in England in the 1660s are among the most technically sophisticated, yet enigmatic, examples of Stuart needlework. Scholars have long debated their original function—whether they served as receptacles for a newborn child’s baptismal garments in the tradition of earlier Dutch layette baskets, or if they commemorated betrothal and were used at wedding ceremonies to hold favors such as gloves or herbs. Beadwork projects may also have been the apogee of the needlework education of a young girl of the affluent classes, prized for the vivid color they added to the domestic interior. The motifs found on the small number of surviving beadwork baskets suggest that their purpose was indeed to celebrate marital union, with courting couples and brightly colored renditions of flowers, fruits, trees, and animals evoking the garden of Eden.

In this newly discovered basket, a handsomely dressed couple stands flanked by oak trees before a stately turreted house; a conservatory of flora and fauna surrounds them. The man wears a doublet over wide petticoat breeches, and holds a sword and his doffed black hat trimmed with ribbon loops. Red-and-blue striped white beads make up the man’s distinctive boot hose, while his black leather shoes feature butterfly bows at the instep and red and white soles. The woman, with cascades of curls framing her face, wears a gown with a pointed bodice and large sleeves ending in lace cuffs; her left hand lifts her overskirt to reveal a petticoat. Her dress, hair, and pose recall several figures by Wenceslaus Hollar published in his 1640 book *Ornatus Muliebris*, as well as his 1643 etching “Spring.” A print source for the male figure has yet to be identified, though he is similar to the depiction of a man on a basket in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow (29/176). The faces and hands of the couple are of canvas worked with silk threads in tent stitch. A small dog stands by the man’s right leg, and the grassy ground at the lower edge teems with a snake, a centipede, and a snail. The parrot on a branch bearing fruit appears on countless embroideries at this time and is derived from a similar image published by print seller Thomas Johnson in his *A Booke of Beast, Birds, Flowers, Fruits, Flies and Wormes* of 1630.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, British merchants began to import a large number of beads from Venice and Amsterdam. Known as “beugles,” these small tumbled glass beads were used to create caskets, mirror frames, bags, hair ornaments, and even candlesticks. Red beads were the most expensive and were therefore sparingly used; on this basket, they decorate the belly of the stag, while elsewhere (on the strawberries and in the man’s mantle, for example) white beads were coated with a surface layer of red paint to mimic the more costly scarlet beads.

Although some elements of these baskets were made at home by young girls, other parts may have been available ready-made, such as the separate three-dimensional flowers and fruits. Three identical baskets with differing dates survive, supporting the hypothesis that some of these pieces were offered as customizable kits (Victoria & Albert Museum, T.69-1936; Sheffield City Museum; and private collection). All of the basket’s motifs were worked separately by threading waxed linen threads through multiple beads in order to form a flexible network, then outlined in linen-wrapped wire to hold its shape, and lastly attached to the latticed base and sides. To create the ripe fruits that dangle from each of the four corners of the basket, the embroiderer enveloped a wadded wool core with a sheath of beads. Alternating with these fruits are a number of blossoms and quasi-heraldic animals in repose including a lion, leopard, camel, and stag. The floral and faunal motifs are very similar to those on a basket in the collection of Stranger’s Hall, Norfolk, which features an identical stag and lion, as well as the same blue and white striped top rail and handles.

Only 30 of these baskets are known to survive, many of them smaller, in poor condition, and of lesser quality than the current example. Of these, eight include dates, ranging from 1656 to 1670, suggesting that these baskets enjoyed a relatively brief vogue.

Provenance: Descended in the family of Edmond Neville-Nevill (b. ca. 1849), whose ancestors included the Earls of Abergavenny from North Yorkshire. In the seventeenth century, the Neville-Nevill family intermarried with the Percy family, also of North Yorkshire, and it is likely that the initials that appear on this piece (EP, MP, and AP) relate to this family.

24.5” L x 21” W x 4” H







GIRDLE

English, Rebecca Eggelton, 1698

This late-seventeenth-century dress accessory—a girdle worn around the waist—expresses the virtues of womanhood, both in the article of clothing itself and in the words that flow along its narrow width. A rare article surviving from this period, the girdle comes with the added cachet of being signed and dated by its maker, Rebecca Eggelton. The handwork of this industrious woman, with its pious inscription of feminine ideals, embodies a poignant sense of her life in late-seventeenth-century England.

The girdle's opening lines are taken from Proverbs 31 which describes a woman's role as a faithful wife, mother, and mistress of her household; the girdle's text then continues with a biblical reference to the dove Noah sends out from the ark and returns bearing an olive branch:

Favour is deceitfull and beauty is vain,
but woman that feareth the Lord shall be praised,
give her of the fruit of her hands and let her own works
Lord my soul like Noah's weary dove, can find no rest but in thy ark above
Rebecca Eggelton, her girdel, 1698

In addition to the inscriptions, the girdle invokes an inherent biblical connotation with the Madonna's girdle which is often depicted in medieval and Renaissance art. At the Assumption of Mary to heaven her girdle is dropped down to Thomas the Apostle when he doubts the resurrection of Christ.

The complex technique which Rebecca Eggelton used to make her girdle is a type of double layer letter braiding that requires two people to manipulate silk threads and create the patterns. The instructions for crossing the threads to make braids of this type can be found in the rare, extant pattern books; along with the patterns, two of the surviving examples also include verses to work into the braids. The Metropolitan Museum holds two of these known pattern books: one having belonged to Phelitia Millward in 1664 (33.50) and the second having belonged to Lucie Glover in 1665 (44.46). Both books, which are English, give directions for plain braids ("To make a round stringe"), for braids with various geometric patterns ("To make the cross and diamond"), and also for incorporating the letters of the alphabet into the braided work (although part of the alphabet instructions in Lucie Glover's book is now missing). In both books silk samples of some of the patterns are inserted to document the designs.

Braided cords without lettering were most often used as drawstrings for small purses, which the pattern books indicate clearly ("To make a purs stringe"), but the braids served as carrying strings for other seventeenth-century objects as well, such as a knife sheath. Braiding that incorporates text is seen less frequently. This girdle is one example; another is a bookmark that accompanies an English devotional book from the mid-seventeenth century (illustrated in the Cora Ginsburg Winter 2009–10 catalog and now in a private collection). The bookmark consists of multiple strands of text which spell out biblical verses and other pious sayings.

In order to make "her girdel" with its extensive lettering Rebecca Eggelton would have first needed to have in hand the instructions for how to incorporate each letter of the alphabet into the braid. Like Phelitia Millward and Lucie Glover, she might have either owned a pattern book in which were written down the instructions for making braids, or she might have had access to a family member's book. These recorded techniques allowed Rebecca, with the assistance of other women, to manipulate silk threads and incorporate concepts of piety and womanhood into an object bearing her name and indentifying her personal virtues.

70.5" L x .40" W



BIZARRE SILK TABLE COVER

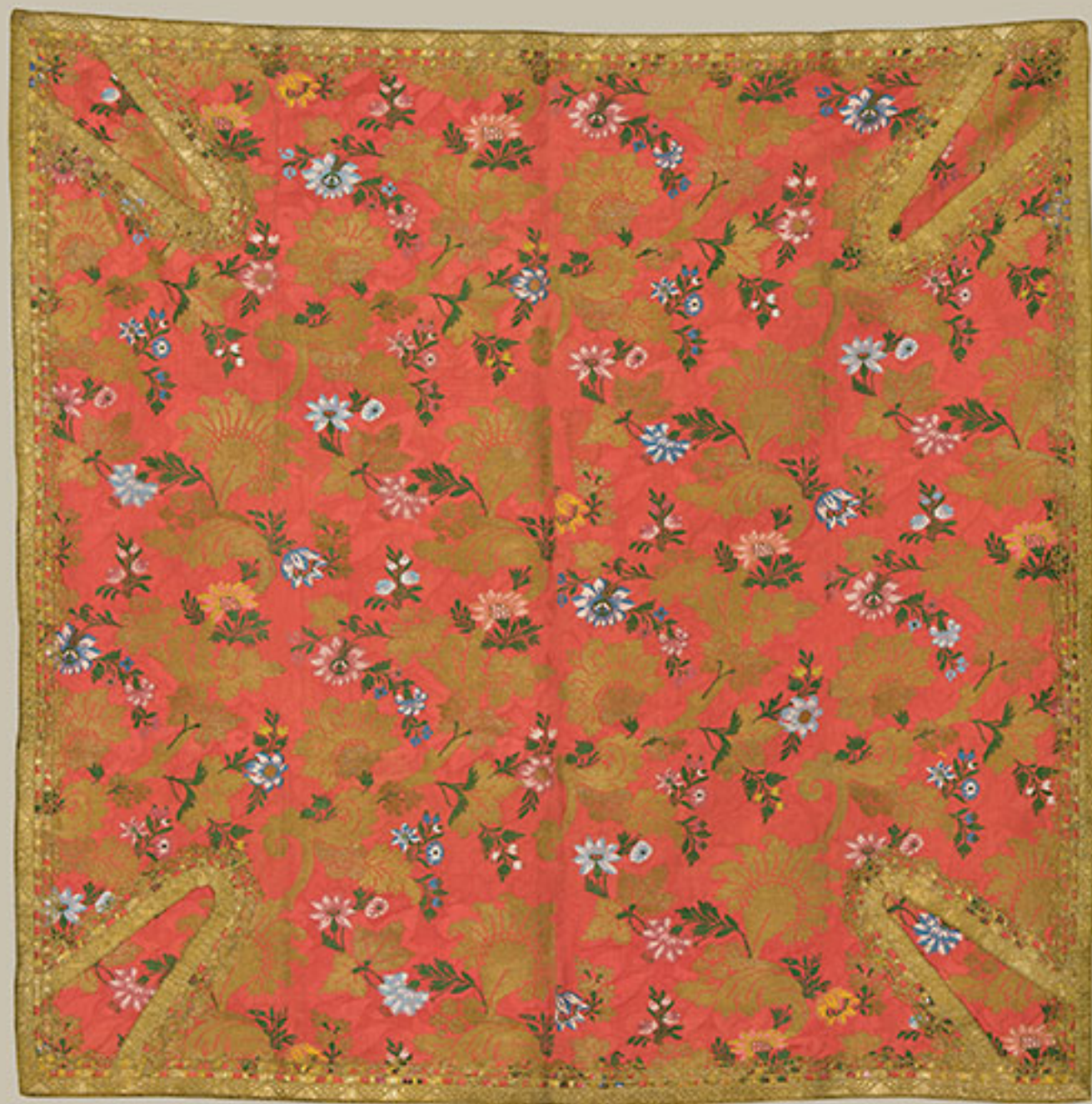
French or Italian, ca. 1700–15

For European silk designs, the beginning of the eighteenth century marks a distinct and important point when the strong impact of Eastern motifs is fully realized. A predominant textile style from that period, featuring richly brocaded exotic forms with damask outlining, has become known to scholars as Bizarre silks. In the early eighteenth century Bizarre silks were desirable among wealthy Europeans seeking the latest styles for use in fashionable dresses as well as for interior decoration such as seen in this luxurious table cover.

All silks of this period were expensive luxury goods and buyers were offered a wide variety of choices from plain weaves, to single color floral damasks, to extravagant brocades, covering a range of prices. The highly patterned silks of the period included designs such as this Bizarre example with supplementary gold filé and frisé threads adding to its sumptuousness. In Bizarre silks textile designers of the period used Eastern motifs in a way that neither mimicked nor modified the imported styles but instead appropriated these influences to create a novel design aesthetic that remains compelling today.

The table cover, with a bright coral damask ground characteristic of Bizarre silks, combines polychrome, naturalistic flowers, including carnations and tulips, with large stylized motifs worked in gold threads. These eastern-inspired gold florals and foliage dominate the silk, providing a strong visual sense of grandeur. The multiple textures (the different types of gold threads and the silk brocading wefts) and weave structures (damask shadowing and twill patterning in the gold motifs) create highly sophisticated reflections of light and color. Gold galloon tape, with an unusual scrolling gimp edging, finishes the table cover's four sides and loops decoratively at each corner in a rounded V-shape. On its reverse, the table cover is finished with a green silk taffeta lining.

40.5" H x 40.5" W



WOMAN'S KNITTED SILK AND SILVER-GILT JACKET Probably Italian, ca. 1630–50

Likely adopted as informal, at-home attire by men and women, knitted “waistcoats” (as they were called in England) were comparable to embroidered jackets that served the same function. However, unlike the latter which are depicted in a number of late sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century portraits, there are no known visual representations of these knitted garments, prompting questions regarding the precise context in which they were worn.

The jacket’s unstructured shape is composed of five rectangular panels – two for the front, one for the back, and two for the sleeves – joined at the shoulders, sides, and along the inner arms. This unfitted T-form suggests the possibility that the component pieces were purchased flat and made up to fit the individual wearer. Knitted primarily in stockinette stitch, the pattern of alternating rows of golden stylized floral sprays on curving stems against a green ground imitates woven silk designs of the 1620s and 1630s. At the turn of the seventeenth century, small, repeating patterns – both symmetrical and asymmetrical – in silks intended for clothing were introduced. In many of these, the motifs are brocaded with metal threads; the brocading wefts are simulated in the jacket by yellow silk yarn loosely wrapped with silver-gilt thread. Three narrow geometric bands delineate the neckline, armholes, wrists, and lower edge, and a knit and purl basket-weave pattern forms the cuffs and hem. While some similar surviving jackets have lacing holes or buttons as a form of closure, others – including this one – are plain, suggesting that the front edges were secured with pins.

Scholars have proposed a number of possible centers of production in Europe for these jackets that share stylistic characteristics and techniques. Their manufacture was long attributed to Italy and, in particular, to the cities of Venice and Milan which were known to have knitting industries. Recently published literature on the production of clothing in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Naples provides documentary evidence suggesting this city as another source for fine, silk-knitted garments. Additional research has shown that during the same period, Naples also exported the type of silk used for knitwear to Britain. The survival of knitted jackets in Scandinavia and archival records in the Netherlands relating to its well-established knitting industry may indicate yet another location that manufactured these garments. Although William Lee introduced the knitting frame into England in the late sixteenth century, the surviving jackets are clearly hand made. Lee’s invention was not capable of producing the fine gauge seen in these pieces or the purl stitch used in the basket-patterning at the edges.

Approximately 35 knitted jackets are in museum collections in Europe, the United States and Canada, and Japan. This example relates to several others including those at the Victoria and Albert Museum (807-1904), the Royal Ontario Museum (2007.28.1), the Museo Stibbert (13.887), the Museo di Capodimonte (921), and the Cleveland Museum of Art (1931.62). All of these feature a similar combination of solid-colored silk and metal-wrapped thread, twisting floral motifs, and basket-patterning at the cuffs and hem. The Cleveland jacket is especially close in its green and gold coloration, the rendering of the sprays, and the placement of the narrow, geometric bands







DOLL'S PUDDING CAP European, 18th century

Protecting children's heads from injury is a longstanding concern of parents, particularly during the toddler stage when a child is learning to walk. As a preventative measure children of past centuries wore a padded cap known as a pudding to cushion falls. Made of cloth or leather, the pudding is constructed of rolls filled with horsehair, straw, or similar fibers, with the main roll encasing the circumference of the child's head. Puddings were often worn over a silk or linen cap or over a piece of linen cloth. The wearing of pudding caps can be seen in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century portraits; their use continued into the nineteenth century although it was considered old-fashioned by that date.

Paintings provide excellent visual information about puddings, showing how and when they were worn. A work by Peter Paul Rubens ca. 1636 depicts his young son Frans, along with his wife and himself, posed in a garden setting. Frans's head is covered with a white linen cloth tied under his chin; atop the cloth sits a blue pudding cap, with a padded roll and narrow ribbon ties across the crown (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981.238). In Nicolaes Maes's "The Lacemaker," ca. 1656, a seated child wears a red pudding over a white linen cloth (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 32.100.5), similar to that worn in the Rubens work. In the eighteenth century puddings appear in various depictions of genre scenes by painters, such as can be seen in François Boucher's "Family Taking Breakfast," 1739 (Louvre, R.F. 926).

The origins of the term "pudding" to describe this particular type of child's cap is most commonly explained by the similarity of the rolls to the shape and size of a British sausage known as "pudding." Another interesting possible link is nautical: the Oxford English Dictionary defines a pudding as "a wreath of plaited cordage around the mast" which was used as a padding or fender.

This pudding is constructed of bright red leather padded and quilted into thick bands that circumscribe the head and bands that meet at the top; the edges are bound in red silk with a red silk tie at the crown; it is lined in beige leather. The small circumference of this pudding, with its interior measurement of three inches, was likely made for a doll rather than a child. While most eighteenth-century dolls were dressed as adults in fashionable clothes, some examples represent children. A doll in the collection of Colonial Williamsburg (G1971-1739) wears a dress which at first glance appears to be for an adult but closer inspection reveals leading strings attached to the back shoulders of the dress, indicating that it is attired as a child. In the Rubens painting, Frans also wears leading strings along with his pudding.

Costume accessories worn by children survive with much less frequency than those of adults. Known examples of puddings are in the collections of Colonial Williamsburg, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Manchester City Museums.

Provenance: Ex. coll. Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen; formerly in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (CI 41.144.2).

3" H x 4" W (shown at actual size)

OPEN ROBE AND PETTICOAT
English, ca. 1747 (altered in 1770s)

Glistening with four types of silver thread on an ivory silk faille ground, this gown demonstrates the splendor of the English silk weaving industry in the mid-eighteenth century. Silver lamella, *filé*, and two types of *frisé* threads add dimension to the rhythmic brocaded pattern: scrolling vines, sprouting rose blossoms and pendant buds, are interspersed with curling cartouches filled with bands of variegated diaper patterning.

In the eighteenth century, similar silks woven with a profusion of metallic thread were among the most expensive and were typically reserved for court wear or for special occasions such as balls and, especially, weddings. When George III of England married Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz in September 1761, the bride wore a gown of silver embroidered with silver threads while the groom wore a suit made from cloth of “new manufacture, the Ground Silver with embossed plate and frosted silver.” Wedding gowns could also serve as court wear for members of the nobility. According to the prodigious letter writer Mrs. Mary Delany, Lady Caroline Dawson wore her wedding gown to be presented at court in 1778, where she appeared “glittering like the moon in a limpid stream” in a gown of “all silver—the prettiest silk I ever saw.”

Remarkable for its survival, the dress is all the more exceptional for retaining its original provenance. It descended in the Gell family of Hopton Hall, Derbyshire, in whose possession it remained until the twentieth century. In a letter kept with the dress, descendent M. F. Gell notes that the dress was worn by her great-great-grandmother Honor Borough, who married Philip Gell in 1747. The silk itself is characteristic of those produced in the 1740s; it closely resembles a design drawn by Anna Maria Garthwaite in 1742 and sold to Captain Peter Lekeux, a leading Spitalfields master weaver, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (design, 5980:24/A; textile, T.81-2938). Gell descended from the branch of the family that traces its lineage back to the marriage of Ralph Gell (1491–1564, who purchased the Hopton estate in 1553), to his second wife Emma Beresford. Although minor country gentry, the Gells could afford sumptuous clothing, as this dress makes clear. A member of the same family owned the salmon pink Bizarre silk mantua ca. 1708 now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1991.6.1a-b).

In its original form, the wedding gown was probably constructed with broad box pleats falling from the shoulders, and would have been worn with square panniers to create the fashionably expansive silhouette of the 1740s, when dresses were at their widest. The dress was altered in the 1770s to its current form, possibly by the original wearer’s daughter, also named Honor, who married Joseph Bainbigge on May 22, 1777. The gown was updated by narrowing and sewing down the pleats at the back to create a *robe à l’anglaise* with a fitted back, continuing from the neck to hem *en fourreau*. The wide wing cuffs that would have appeared on the 1740s dress have here been converted to double scalloped flounces, trimmed with silver galloon (the right cuff even retains the circular casing for a sleeve weight). Pinked bands of the silver brocade were ruched, gathered in puckers, and then sewn in intertwining serpentine bands down the front robings and along the sides of the open skirts. A half petticoat of the same material is similarly trimmed with applied bands of fabric in a swirling symmetrical design.

The Victoria and Albert Museum preserves an embroidered court dress associated with the wedding of Isabella Courtenay to Dr. John Andrew at Exeter Cathedral in 1744 (T.260&A-1969). Although altered, the dress seen here is therefore the second earliest extant English wedding gown with a related provenance, a significant artifact that allows a glimpse of the sartorial brilliance of Georgian England.







EVENING DRESS, no. 4348
MADELEINE VIONNET
French, April 1931

World renowned for her innovative use of the bias, Madeleine Vionnet (1876–1975) elevated the *métier* of couturier to a fine art with her impeccably constructed garments designed to slide over the curves of a woman's body. Apprenticed at age 11 to a local seamstress, Vionnet worked in the mid-1890s both in Paris and London, where, as a seamstress for dressmaker Kate Reily, she sewed gowns for the newly minted Duchess of Marlborough. In 1901, she became a head dressmaker at the celebrated house of Callot Soeurs, and in 1906, she was engaged by Jacques Doucet to be the head designer at his eponymous couture house. In 1912 Vionnet opened her own establishment at 222 rue de Rivoli. Until the closure of her house in 1939, Vionnet remained the most universally respected of couturiers, and was the top choice for many of the world's discerning socialites.

One of her elegant clients was Lady Foley, née Minoru Greenstone (ca. 1888–1968), the daughter of a wealthy diamond miner from Johannesburg, South Africa. She married Gerald Henry Foley, 7th Baron Foley (1898–1927) in 1922 and quickly joined the ranks of the London and Paris elite. Widowed in 1928, she nonetheless continued to patronize her favorite couturière, remaining loyal to Vionnet throughout the 1930s. The *Times* of London recorded her frequent trips to Paris. In May 1931, Lady Foley traveled to the French capital, likely ordering this embroidered evening dress, a customized version of model 4348 from the early spring collection presented in April. Of this collection, Marjorie Howard of *Harper's Bazaar* wrote that month, "I thought that Madame Vionnet had reached her zenith in last August's collection; but I was mistaken, for she has succeeded in surpassing it." She singled out the designer's grand circle skirts with scalloped "petal" hems, noting that they were "the most voluminous in Paris, but they are beautifully handled."

This gown is a masterpiece of cut, embroidery, and color. The ankle-length dress is made from an extremely supple coffee-colored silk tulle, probably custom-dyed in house, three layers of which—all cut on the bias—make up the skirt. The outermost layer is constructed from two truncated quadrants that nearly form a full circle, a favored Vionnet patterning technique that allowed the skirt to fall in elegant vertical folds. Each of the layers is cut with ten scallops at the hem, a shape echoed in the seaming of the outer layer to the inner underdress at the hips. Vionnet disguised this seaming with three tiers of swags of embroidered dogwood or rose blossoms, executed in satin stitch with lightly spun silk in shades of ivory, peach, beige, pink, and butter yellow. Pink French knots accent the centers of some of the flowers. Dimensionally rendered curling petals appear as if cascading over the sleeveless bodice into the lower portion of the skirt; each petal is outlined by a flattened copper-colored metallic yarn, adding a subtle glint to an overall design that underscores Vionnet's persistent romantic strain. Vionnet was extremely fastidious about the surface ornamentation that appeared on her dresses, usually working closely with the Lesage embroidery house to design motifs and to ensure that embroiderers would not distort the intended drape of her designs. The dramatic bow at the right shoulder softens the shoulder line, while adding a further element of romanticism to the dress. However, it is also fully functional—the long trailing streamers are cut-in-one with the bodice pieces and open at the shoulder to aid in dressing.

Vionnet paid careful attention to the demands of her customers, though it was clear she had the final word. "A special model is made for each woman, according to her type, her figure, her coloring, and her age. If the [client] doesn't like it, she has only to withdraw." This dress perfectly represents the fruits of a close relationship between client and couturière, the melding of a singular creative vision with the particular demands of an exacting connoisseur of dress.

PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON CURTAIN
Indian (Coromandel Coast) for the European Market, mid-18th century

The luxuriant pattern of diagonally disposed bands of blue bouquets alternating with red and purple floral sprays epitomizes the beauty and sophistication of eighteenth-century Indian painted-and-dyed cottons that were highly regarded and widely sought after in the West. Although many Indian palampores with Tree of Life motifs survive from the period, it is exceptionally rare that yardage in its original configuration as a curtain has remained intact with its glazed finish.

The design's overall effect is of sequentially repeating rows, underscored by the regular juxtaposition of blue and red; the delicate serpentine stems and tendrils of the red blossoms meander between and through the orderly progression of the dense blue bouquets. Close inspection, however, reveals that the bands repeat in pairs and that there are slight variations in the rendering of the flowers as well as in the small filling patterns within the petals and leaves. The bouquets, especially, contain finely drawn stripes, crescents, diamonds, dots, and miniature sprigs. As seen in many Indian export cottons, the motifs combine Eastern and Western elements. Some of the stylized flowers and fruits would have been familiar to Europeans including carnations, roses, lilies, and pomegranates, while the fantastical blossoms would have appealed to the taste for the "exotic" typical of Indian trade textiles. Even the scattered butterflies whose blue and red wings nearly camouflage them as they hover at the edges of red flowers display whimsically attenuated heads, round, segmented bodies, and curlicue antennae.

The bold palette dominated by reds and blues with touches of purple demonstrates the mastery of colorfast dyeing on cotton that was a specialty of Indian artisans. The introduction of these vibrantly hued, washable dress and furnishing textiles into Europe around 1600 made a significant impact and unleashed an ever-growing demand. The Coromandel Coast was the main area for both the manufacture and exportation of chintz—the English term denoting patterned cottons—and by the eighteenth century, the well-established trade networks of the English, Dutch, and French East India Companies supplied Western consumers with a wide range of these goods. Hand-painted chintzes required weeks and often months to create. The lengthy process began with the preparation of the woven cotton to make it more receptive to dyestuffs; then followed the laborious application of colorants, mordants, and wax; the immersion of the cloth in various dyebaths; and a final cleaning to remove residue materials. The roots of the madder plant (chay root, in India) in combination with alum or iron mordants produced rich shades of red, pink, and purple, while a wax-resist technique used with indigo resulted in blues from pale to inky black. The yellow and green details in both the flowers and leaves were achieved, respectively, with turmeric yellow and indigo over-dyed with yellow.

The curtain is made up of a full selvage width with pieces added along one side and across the top. Although curtains were an important decorative and practical component of eighteenth-century beds, this example was more likely used at a window where its profusion of color and naturalistic motifs would have brought the abundance of a lush garden to the juncture between interior and exterior.

87.5" H x 64" W (detail shown)



UNCUT EMBROIDERED CHAIR PANEL
Chinese for the Export Market, late-18th century

The appeal of Chinoiserie in room decorations in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe was considerable in its wide-sweeping use and impressive in its longevity. As trade with China opened up in the seventeenth century motifs associated with Chinoiserie melded into the European design aesthetic. Throughout the eighteenth century the attraction of Chinoiserie grew to great popularity in numerous aspects of European decorative art and design.

Eighteenth-century Chinoiserie-themed rooms and houses would typically include a mixture of sensibilities, combining objects from China—both those traditionally made for domestic consumption and those for export to the West— with European rococo furniture, wall decorations, and other non-Eastern elements. This uncut panel of sumptuous yellow silk satin, embroidered with elements for a chair seat, chair back, and arm pads to fit a Western eighteenth-century chair, embodies the desired style and colors that fabrics for the export market brought to European interiors. The vogue for Chinese houses, pavilions, and gardens among eighteenth-century royalty led Swedish King Adolf Fredrik to present his queen, Lovisa Ulrika, with a wooden Chinese pleasure palace at Drottningholm in 1753 which was replaced in the 1760s with a more permanent structure known as the Chinese Pavilion. King Frederick II of Prussia created his Chinese House ca. 1754–7 in the gardens at Sanssouci Palace. Given the royal admiration for Chinoiserie it is not surprising that upper-class Europeans often followed suit when planning the decorations of their rooms.

A room with fabrics from China, including embroideries such as this as well as painted taffetas and gauzes, would have conveyed the recognizable presence of foreign-made luxury goods. The embroidery on this surviving panel, of brightly colored silk threads worked in long-and-short, stem, chain stitches, and French knots, would have decorated several panels of silk for use on a suite of chairs. The imagery associated with Chinoiserie, taken from pattern books and artists' renditions such as those of François Boucher, is seen within the central cartouches of the chair seat and back. On the seat a vase with a bracketed handle holds an arrangement of trailing flowers and vines, and on the back two Chinese figures, one smoking a pipe and the other holding a lotus flower, appear within a garden scene. The surrounding florals complement the motifs, yet add a European feel.

Articles for export, such as waistcoats, women's jumps, and upholstery items such as this example, were often sent to the West in the form seen here with the embroidered elements remaining uncut from the ground fabric. It would be the upholsterer's role to cut out the pieces and apply them to the client's furniture, producing the finished chairs which exhibited one's consumption of fashionable imported Chinoiserie fabric and taste.

55" H x 31.5" W



WOOL APPLIQUÉ AND EMBROIDERED HANGING English, ca. 1815–20

This rare and unusual wool appliqué and embroidered hanging charmingly conveys the sights, sounds, and festivities of a rural winter fair in early-nineteenth-century England. The bustle and sometimes carnivalesque atmosphere of these vibrant gatherings are recorded—and often caricatured—in many paintings and prints of the period, but much less frequently in textiles. As depicted in its three wide registers, the fair served an important social and economic function that brought together all the members of a particular community. Several of the vignettes shown here would have been familiar to fairs throughout the year, but the inclusion at the top of a young woman selling mistletoe to a male admirer suggests a Christmas setting.

Across the registers, participants of all ages make purchases, enjoy musical entertainment, and offer alms. Along the top a trio of soldiers—one beating a drum—advances on the mistletoe seller; a fashionably dressed young woman wearing a plumed hat with a small dog pawing at her coat hem examines one of the bonnets that hang temptingly in a hat maker’s stand; and a little girl reaches eagerly for a large doll at a toy seller’s booth. Elsewhere, a family gazes up at a wagon where a man plays a trumpet, a young girl claps a tambourine, and a monkey perches on the roof; a couple shares a drink from a goblet; farmers herd their sheep and cows; and a cavalry officer on his horse and a young man on his steed survey the scene.

Throughout the hanging, details of early-nineteenth-century dress delineating the different social strata that congregated at fairs are meticulously observed. Among the men, several wear top hats, cutaway coats with long tails or frock coats, high cravats, and trousers signifying the latest styles in masculine attire; working-class men—including a farmer with his two cows, a red-coated vendor standing on his wagon, and a peddler offering a bolt of cloth to a young girl—adhere to outmoded eighteenth-century costume. Two sailors—one with a wooden leg—appear in their characteristic short jackets, trousers, and clogs, and the soldiers are clearly noticeable in their red uniform coats with white passementerie, shakos, and bicorn. Among the women, several wear open-brimmed, high-crowned hats, high-waisted flared coats, and short jackets known as spencers fashionable from about 1815 to 1820; others are portrayed in the round hats, hooded cloaks, and shawls typical of working-class women.

Appliquéd onto a soft grey wool ground, the fair’s scenes are made of twill and plain woven wools that were used for men’s fashionable clothing (primarily in dark and neutral colors) and for their bright red military uniforms. In many cases, these pieces are layered to create a three-dimensional effect. Details of dress, hair, and facial features as well as the delicate, branching trees are embroidered in wool threads in a variety of stitches. Around the four sides, thick, couched red wool thread forms a chevron patterned border, edged with matching fringe.

The hanging was likely made by a woman, although men (especially tailors) also produced wool hangings and quilts. However, men’s quilts were often done in more difficult inlaid or mosaic techniques, rather than appliqué as in this example. In its imagery, materials, and technique, this piece is strikingly similar to a coverlet made by Ann West in 1820, now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (T23-2007) and published in *Quilts 1700–2010: Hidden Histories, Untold Stories*, Sue Prichard, ed., 2010, pp. 89-91, 194. Although the center of West’s coverlet features biblical scenes, the wide borders contain squares and rectangles enclosing figures and domestic and farm animals. In both pieces, many of the styles of dress as well as their details are clearly related. Another point of similarity is the inclusion of a black male figure. Here, the figure wearing a pointed red cap and carrying a sack seeks charity from a woman with a furled umbrella. In the West coverlet, he is identified as a “Negro Servant,” possibly a reference to slavery, which was not fully abolished in the British Empire until 1833.

27” H x 57” W







WOOL TARTAN BOOTS French, ca. 1860

These eye-catching women's boots of bright wool tartan with matching fringe reflect both the vogue for walking as a leisurely and healthy pursuit in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century and the sustained popularity of this fabric for fashionable dress. Although women began to wear low, "half" boots as a practical alternative to delicate slippers in the early nineteenth century, these were generally unassuming, made of black or neutral-colored wool with leather toes and flat heels. The boldly patterned material and the construction features of this pair—including their front lacing, low wooden heels, placement of the seam joining the vamp and the quarters, machine stitching, and narrow leather strips extending from arch to heel along the outer edges of the sole— suggest a date of about 1860. In the early 1860s, the practice of lifting the crinoline-supported skirts of daywear dresses by interior tapes (or other methods) to facilitate walking drew attention to the exposed foot, allowing women to show off brightly colored footwear now available due to the invention of aniline dyes in 1856.

Tartan has long been associated with the kilt and plaid of Highland dress and its creation is particular to Scottish weavers. The distinctive checked pattern of this twilled wool is achieved by the use of stripes of colored threads that are the same in the warp and weft directions with the selected hues arranged in sets of varying thread counts. In the resulting pattern of stripes and blocks of color called a "sett," each section of the design mirrors the section next to it, repeating vertically and horizontally. Although tartan was a highly politicized fabric in Britain during the eighteenth century and was proscribed in Scotland from 1747 to 1782 for men and boys, by the following century it lost this contested association. The early-nineteenth-century writings of Scottish authors James Macpherson and Sir Walter Scott as well as the pageant-filled visit of King George IV to Edinburgh in 1822 were instrumental in the Highland romantic revival in which tartan came to symbolize Scottish clanship and national identity.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's acquisition of Balmoral Castle in Scotland in 1852 and their endorsement of tartan for both dress and furnishing at this royal retreat generated a craze for the fabric in Britain as well as in the United States and France. In the 1850s and 1860s, women's voluminous mantles and skirts provided ample opportunity to display the contrasting hues of both wool and silk tartans, but they were also frequently used as lively accents on solid-colored garments and for accessories. English, American, and French periodicals refer to tartan, plaid, and *écossais* bonnets, ribbons, hat bands and bindings, scarves, sleeve caps and cuffs, and even a pair of silk gloves with tartan gauntlets.

The trendsetting Empress Eugénie and other stylish French women also sported tartan. In spite of its imprimatur by Queen Victoria, *Godey's Lady's Book* declared in 1864 that, "As the Empress of the French and the Duchess de Moray have adopted the *Tartan*, our ladies must certainly follow suit." In October 1863, the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* reported somewhat humorously on the "furore" for plaid cloaks in Paris and the "Scotch" costume that was a favorite among female visitors to the Normandy resort of Trouville, who "adopt it in strict accordance with the Highlanders' traditions, scarf, pouch, belt, feather, and all." In addition to finished goods that were available in Paris shops, tartan wools and flannels were advertised by numerous purveyors listed in the city's annual commercial directory from the 1840s to the 1860s.

Clearly intended to be noticed below the hem of the skirt, these boots may well have coordinated with other elements of the wearer's ensemble. The jaunty matching wool fringe on this pair was a point of fashion at the time; in 1863, the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* announced the availability of chenille fringe made in "all the hues of the plaid" that was "manufactured expressly" as a matching trim for dress fabrics.



MAN'S GLOVES
Indian (Kashmir), ca. 1780

The delicate floral patterns that appear on this pair of man's gloves are quintessentially Indian motifs often seen on printed cottons and embroideries from the seventeenth through the twenty-first centuries. To find these sprigs of flowers on a pair of woolen gloves, made in a country whose textile production is highly dominated by cotton and linen, is unexpected, yet indicative of the confluence of cultures present in late-eighteenth-century India when these gloves were made.

This pair belongs to a small group of known related socks, gloves, and stockings that originate in Kashmir. These objects stylistically appear to have been made for export, and it is their connection to an Englishman's role in India that provides some historical context. Two pairs of gloves in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum (EAX.2480 and EAX.2479), are known to have belonged to Warren Hastings (1732–1818) who was appointed the first Governor-General of India in 1773, and held that position until 1784. The short pair has a white ground and bears the same pattern as the pair seen here. Another pair of gloves in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (IM.143&A-1926) also shows this identical design on a green ground. Other examples of Kashmiri gloves, as well as socks and stockings, with design features that relate this group of objects include a second pair of gloves at the Victoria and Albert Museum (IM.145&A-1926) and a pair at the Yale University Art Gallery (1937.5271). One predominant element of these gloves is the red or sometimes pink tips of the fingers.



While most of these articles are described as knitted, a technique believed to have been introduced by Europeans to India, Richard Rutt in his discussion of Kashmiri knitting in *A History of Hand Knitting* (1987) notes that the short gloves in the collections of the Ashmolean and the Victoria and Albert are possibly a type of crochet. The structure of those short gloves, as well as the pair seen here, relate to the crochet structure of an Indian pipe bag and an Indian money belt that Peter Collingwood identifies and discusses in his book, *The Maker's Hand: A Close Look at Textile Structures* (1987).

The production of trade textiles for the French, Dutch, and English East India Companies led to a malleable design aesthetic, in which traditional Indian motifs appeared freely on articles such as these woolen gloves and the incorporation of Western styles combined fluidly with Indian traditions.

8" H x 6" W



84.5" H x 51" W



33" H x 37" W



90" H x 58.5" W

IKAT PANELS

Central Asian (Bukhara and Samarkand), early-and mid-19th century

An unending variety of brilliant, shimmering colors and large-scale blurred, abstracted motifs defines nineteenth-century Central Asian ikats. Produced in the oasis cities of present-day Uzbekistan, these resplendent textiles figured prominently in all aspects of everyday life and in important rituals such as weddings, the birth of a child, and welcoming the New Year. Made up into loose-fitting robes that served as indicators of status, they adorned the bodies of men, women, and children; as domestic furnishings, they transformed interiors into exuberant, garden-like spaces.

Although there is little evidence that these silks were woven in the region before 1800, they rapidly achieved a high degree of artistry and skill. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Bukhara was the primary center of manufacture for ikats. Several factors contributed to this success: the presence of a court and wealthy upper class eager for luxury fabrics; the city's ethnically diverse population among whom resided many different craftsmen including silk reelers, warpers, weavers, and dyers; and a plentiful availability of raw materials.

The production of ikat required many painstaking processes from the extraction of filaments from silk worm cocoons to imparting a lustrous finish to the completed textile with the application of egg whites or by beating it with a heavy wooden mallet. The most crucial step, however, was resist-dyeing the warp threads prior to weaving. A specialist craftsman marked the design onto the stretched warps with charcoal. Following this, pre-determined groups of warps were bound with cotton thread to reserve sections not intended to receive color, soaked in mordants to fix the dyestuffs, submerged in dye-baths, unwrapped, and re-bound in different areas. These steps were repeated as often as necessary depending on the number of desired colors and their degree of saturation. Ikat dyers specialized in certain colors: Tadjiks, in particular, were skilled at hot dyeing a range of reds, bright pinks, yellows, greens, and purples; cold dyeing with indigo to produce blue was often done by Jewish artisans. Most time-consuming were ikats that featured seven colors. The slight shifting of the warps each time they were retied resulted in the softened edges of the motifs when the fabric was woven, an effect referred to as "abr," or cloud-like, in Persian. The creation of ikat was considered a sacred activity; craftsmen were taught to revere their labor and even instructed to recite special verses as they worked.

These three panels, which probably functioned as hangings or covers, represent a small sampling of ikat's vibrant hues, bold compositions, and highly stylized motifs. Although many motifs including cypress trees, amulets, and scorpion tails held symbolic significance when they were used in other media, in ikats, these meanings were subordinated to the visually compelling impression of the textile as a whole. In the smallest of these three pieces, the pointed, scrolling shapes derive from rams' horns that have been abstracted into a purely ornamental device. The blue, red, and white hanging demonstrates the reciprocal interchange between ikats and carpets; the bifurcated spandrels forming "cloud bands" relate to elements in carpets from eastern Turkestan.

All the pieces are woven in warp-faced plain weave with fine silk warps and heavier white cotton wefts, creating a ribbed surface. The "cloud band" panel has five colors; both of the others have six. In most instances, the designs are matched along the narrow joined widths that make up the panels; however, ikat makers and consumers alike admired and appreciated the limitless possibilities that occurred from misalignments and the combination of multiple patterns in a single piece. As is customary, the panels are lined with printed cottons; the block-printed cotton on the reverse of the blue, red, and white hanging dates this piece to the early part of the nineteenth century.

Related panels are illustrated in *Splendid Silks of Central Asia: Ikat, the Guido Goldman Collection*, 1997, p. 37 ("cloud-band" pattern) and p. 138 (rams' horn pattern); and in *Ikats, Woven Silks from Central Asia, The Rau Collection*, 1988, pp. 26-27 (rams' horn pattern) and p. 50 (floral pattern).



VUE SUR LA BAIE
ALBERTO LORENZI FOR BIANCHINI FÉRIER
French, ca. 1922

In the 1920s, the incipient Art Deco style of the pre-World War I years emerged as the dominant aesthetic in architecture, interiors, and furnishings. Textiles were an integral part of this new décor and often provided the main element of color and pattern in rooms in which wall treatments and furniture exhibited pared down lines and shapes. In addition to geometric designs that underscored the simplicity of Art Deco forms, textiles that featured scenes of modern life as well as those that re-interpreted traditional motifs in a contemporary idiom were also popular, especially in France.

Vue sur la baie (View onto the bay), a large-scale furnishing fabric designed by the graphic artist Alberto Lorenzi (1880–1969), is one of several he created for the prominent Lyonnais weaving firm Bianchini Férier in the early to mid-1920s. Swags of floral patterned drapery with tassels and flying cockatoos create a lattice-like framework around a vignette. An inviting table with fruit and wine and a chair offer a view through wide-open glass doors and across the water, a village with densely packed houses nestles at the base of steep hills. The design combines a subtle palette with a textured surface; grey silk warps, blue silk and grey cotton wefts are woven in satin, plain, and twill, juxtaposing shiny and matte areas. While birds, drapery, and flowers appear in furnishing textiles of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, Lorenzi reworks these elements with a modernist sensibility, in part by incorporating them into a scene suggestive of a summer holiday destination. During the interwar years, magazines, newspapers, and posters enticed consumers with images of both summer and winter resorts.

Lorenzi was among a group of well-known artists including Georges Barbier, Paul Iribe, and Georges Lepape, who contributed to deluxe fashion magazines such as the *Journal des Dames et des Modes* (1912–14) and the *Gazette du Bon Ton* (1912–25) as well as designing for other media. In addition to *Vue sur la baie*, Lorenzi produced several other modern-themed textiles for Bianchini Férier, two of which were illustrated in the influential publication *Art et Décoration, Revue mensuelle d'art moderne*. Although the periodical frequently included articles on the fine and applied arts in other European countries, it stressed the superiority and sophistication of French design and manufacture. In a review of the thirteenth *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs* in 1922, which included Lorenzi's *En vacances* and *La Promenade au Bois* (described as "brocatelles"), the magazine praised the "fabrics of Lorenzi [that are] particularly successful since they offer to the eyes the corner of a forest, a calm confusion, organized but without seeming to be so."

Founded in 1888, Bianchini Férier was one of several leading Lyonnais silk weaving firms that actively commissioned designs by avant-garde artists. In his introduction to *Étoffes d'ameublement tissées et brochées* published in 1925 (which illustrates Lorenzi's *La Promenade au Bois*), the writer and journalist Léon Moussinac credited the alliance between manufacturers and artists with revitalizing the textile industry and infusing it with a new approach to design and production.

This panel retains its original tag indicating the design number (60022). Examples of *Vue sur la baie* in different colorways are in the Art Institute of Chicago (1988.537) and in the Musée Historique des Tissus in Lyon (MT 50171.15). The panel in the latter institution, from the Bianchini Férier archive, has a tag that identifies the title of the fabric, *Vue sur la baie*. A green and fawn example is illustrated in *Neo-Classicism to Pop: Twentieth-Century Textiles*, Sue Kerry, 2007, p. 58-59, fig. 19.

108" H x 51.5" W (detail shown)

KERNOO
PRINTED COTTON BY VICTOR VASARELY FOR EDINBURGH WEAVERS
Scottish, 1962

Born Gyözö Vásárhelyi in Hungary, Victor Vasarely (1906–97) is today remembered as the father of Optical Art, a term coined by the seminal exhibition “The Responsive Eye” at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965 in which his canvases were featured. Confident in a variety of media, from painting to architecture and sculpture, Vasarely preferred to be called a “plasticien” rather than a painter. He began his artistic education at the Fine Arts Academy in Budapest in 1925, but moved to the Mehely Academy, known as the “Budapest Bauhaus,” in 1929. A year later he settled in Paris, where he supported himself as a commercial artist throughout the 1930s. Much of his work was influenced by Surrealism, but by the early 1950s he had abandoned representational pictorial strategies altogether for colorful abstract compositions. In 1955, he began his “black and white” period, relying increasingly on rigid geometric shapes, grids, and repeating forms of varying sizes in his paintings, tendencies that ultimately led to his optical paintings of the early 1960s.

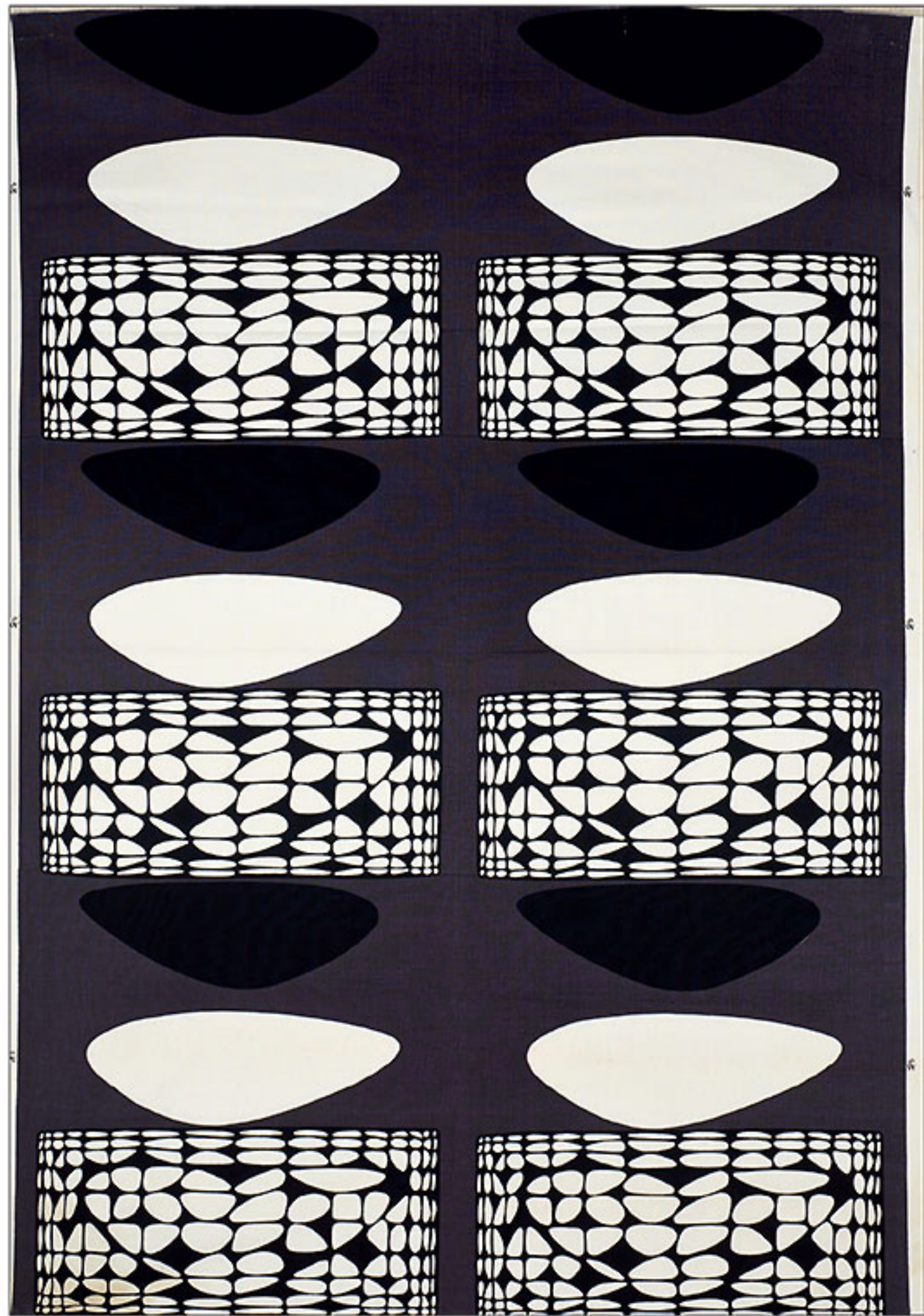
Although “The Responsive Eye” made Vasarely internationally famous, he was already well-known to cognoscenti of the modern art world, such as Alastair Morton, the visionary head of the British textile firm Edinburgh Weavers. In 1961, Morton purchased two small gouaches by Vasarely from an exhibition at the Hanover Gallery in London, *Kernoo* (ca. 1947–9) and *Oeta* (1957), which were used to create textiles that debuted as part of Edinburgh Weavers’ Autumn 1962 line, the only textiles designed by Vasarely ever produced commercially.

Morton, a gifted artist himself, had a long history of incorporating avant-garde fine art movements into the textiles his family’s company produced. When Alastair joined the family business in 1931, he immediately reinvigorated it with his own modernist designs. Under his guidance, Edinburgh Weavers earned important commissions throughout the 1930s from the BBC, furniture designer Gordon Russell, and department stores like Fortnum & Mason, and showed its wares at important design exhibitions. By 1937, when Morton launched the pivotal “Constructivist Fabrics” collection, the company’s first consisting of textiles designed by artists rather than in-house designers, the renowned architectural critic Nicolas Pevsner characterized Edinburgh Weavers as “a laboratory for modern textile art,” and “the most adventurous firm in the country.” After the Second World War, Edinburgh Weavers focused increasingly on screen-printed textiles, which, because of their low production costs, conformed to Morton’s socialist principals of bringing art to the masses. Throughout the 1950s, he produced textiles based on the work of artists such as William Scott, Alan Reynolds, and Joe Tilson, but Vasarely’s textiles were certainly the most severely geometric and limited in terms of color.

Kernoo features distinctive elliptical shapes inspired by pebbles the artist observed on the coast of Belle-Île-en-Mer in France in the summer of 1947. In the final textile, the small gouache has been translated into a two-foot repeating design forming parallel columns of pebbles, transformed into boulders. A pair of black and white stones rests on a rectangle circumscribing the ghost of a third large pebble made up of smaller oblong shapes. The vacillation between large solid shapes that seem to teeter precariously on their edges and the intricacy of the fragmented rectangle endows the textile with a sense of movement and high graphic impact using a minimum of motifs and colors, trademarks of the Op-Art movement. Manufactured only in this one colorway, *Kernoo* was one of Morton’s last contributions to the company he had built to such success, as he died in 1963.

Lengths of *Kernoo* are in the Victoria & Albert Museum (CIRC.327-1963, T.34-2009), and the Designmuseum Danmark, Copenhagen. It is illustrated in *The Victoria & Albert Museum Textile Collection: Textile Design from 1940 to the Present*, Ngozi Ikoku, 1999, p. 31, fig. 75; *Victor Vasarely 1906–1997: Pure Vision*, Magdalena Holzhey, 2005, p. 28; *Artist Designed Textiles 1940–1976*, Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain, and Annamarie Stapleton, 2012, p. 198, fig. 17; and *Alastair Morton and Edinburgh Weavers: Visionary Textiles and Modern Art*, Lesley Jackson, 2012, p. 246-47, 306-07, fig. 434.

72” H x 52” W





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William DeGregorio

Michele Majer

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by appointment

19 East 74th Street
New York, NY 10021
www.coraginsburg.com

tel 212-744-1352
fax 212-879-1601
info@coraginsburg.com