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EMBROIDERED LINEN PILLOW SHAM  
Portuguese, early 17th c.

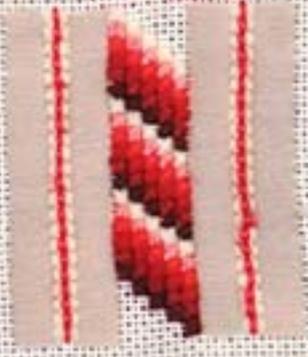
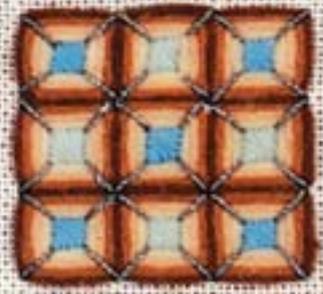
An unusual example of Portuguese domestic embroidery, this pillow sham is decorated with religious imagery befitting a woman's expression of piety and industriousness through needlework. Worked in a defined range of stitches exclusively in pale-colored silk to match the unbleached linen ground, the embroidered motifs effectively combine varied textures and patterns—an extra challenge for a monochromatic palette.

Seen here are allegories representing four of the Seven Virtues. Each figural motif is bracketed by oversized floral branches and labeled in a narrow register above: CARIDADE (Charity); FORTAIECA (Fortitude); TENPERANCA (Temperance); and ESPERACA (Hope). Charity and Hope are two of three Theological Virtues, as extolled in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 13:13); Fortitude and Temperance are two of four Cardinal Virtues inspired by Plato's *Republic*. The fundamental difference between the two sets is that while Cardinal Virtues are learned by practice and discipline, Theological Virtues are acquired through faith alone. These allegorical figures have specific, identifying attributes in place. Charity is depicted caring for a child; Fortitude cradles a broken column in one arm (an allusion to Samson's destruction of the Philistine temple); Temperance pours a measured amount of drink into a cup, demonstrating restraint; and Hope is shown carrying an anchor, symbolic of safe travel. Each virtue sits atop an animal of Christian importance; none is linked with any particular virtue through conventional symbolism and was chosen at the embroiderer's discretion. Charity rides a unicorn while Temperance is paired with a lamb, both potent emblems of purity; more unusual are the gryphon and camel reserved for Fortitude and Hope, respectively. The ancient gryphon, an imaginary combination of lion and eagle, was adapted by early Christians as a symbol of Jesus Christ's dual mortal/divine nature. Able to forgo sustenance and shoulder great burdens, the camel embodies the qualities of sobriety and humility.

Set into borders comprising pulled work linen components, the main panel highlights the effectiveness of a few, high-relief stitches in creating depth and surface interest without the benefit of color for shading and delineation. Chain, star, open Cretan, and sheaf stitches are used throughout. Coral stitch—a series of closely spaced knots tied along the main thread giving the embroidered line a beaded appearance—outlines the motifs; discrete areas of pulled work, couched floss and a distinctive basket-weave darning stitch add contrasting textural dimensions. The restricted color scheme and religious imagery suggest a link with contemporary *tussar* silk Indo-Portuguese embroideries. A related seventeenth-century polychrome silk embroidery is in the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum collection (1902-1-904).

18.25" H x 44" W





BERLIN WOOL WORK SAMPLER  
British, ca. 1840s–70s

Women of the Victorian era embraced decorative needlework as a pleasurable, pragmatic pastime. An excess of ornamentation characterized period interiors, and household embellishment was an appropriate channel for feminine industriousness. Berlin wool work—a colorful type of canvas embroidery especially popular in the mid-to-late nineteenth century—proved an easy and economical way to update home décor and dress. As a prelude to embroidering domestic objects, women often created samplers that recorded various techniques and artistic effects. In the tradition of seventeenth-century spot samplers, these *aide-mémoires* served as repositories of patterns and stitches for future projects.

This Berlin work sampler records a dazzling array of isolated motifs in brilliantly hued wool threads, accented with silk and metallic threads for lustrous highlights. These were likely copied from charts printed on point paper which indicated color choice and appropriate stitches for the most attractive results. Originally printed in Berlin and marketed with fine German merino yarns, which lend the genre its name, these charts were commercially available throughout Europe and removed the guesswork from creating harmonious combinations. An astonishing range of items—from slippers and pincushions to bell-pulls and ottoman upholstery—could be worked with these versatile designs.

Some patterns seen here are sourced from traditional needlework repertoires, such as the imbricated scales and numerous flamepoint variations; others reflect prevailing decorative trends. Blocks of Chinese-inspired fretwork share space at top with a floral branch; directly below is a square of tartan. *The Illuminated Book of Needlework* (1847), a Berlin work manual compiled by Mrs. Henry Owens, gives instructions for replicating these au courant Scottish designs: “These should be worked in Cross Stitch, and may be copied from ribbons, or the new Berlin Patterns of the various Clan Plaids, which are extremely elegant, and are very correct.” Mrs. Owens also published a pattern and advice for working Lace Stitch, citing that it is most beautifully executed “...in black Chantilly silk, both in Cross Stitch and in Straight Stitch, so as to arrive at a sort of dice pattern, and the edge is finished with wool in Cross Stitch.” Three such examples appear here at center, the delicacy of each enhanced with faceted steel beads and pearls. Lace Stitch was especially fashionable in the 1840s. Though the maker dabbled in beadwork and Gobelin, Irish, feather, oblong cross, and cushion stitches, the favored technique was cross stitch.

This impressive sampler was probably a demonstration piece made by an accomplished amateur seeking professional commissions. A glazed cloth-covered cardboard roll, finished with the same russet silk that binds the edges, allows the sampler to be rolled up and secured with ribbon ties for compact storage and easy portability. Comparable examples are found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (57.122.503) and the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.333-1910); the latter, approximately ten feet long, has two Lace Stitch squares similar to those seen here.

49" H x 7.25" W







CREWELWORK COVERLET  
American, 3rd quarter of the 18th c.

Crewelwork made in colonial America is indebted to English antecedents, while English crewelwork derives much of its design aesthetics from Chinese silks and embroideries and Indian painted cottons. Yet within this chain of influences, American crewelwork bears its own imprint and sensibility.

The exceptional quality of this coverlet derives, in part, from the presentation of its motifs—within a formal layout, distinguishing features of American needlework, such as prancing stags, mingle with Eastern-inspired flowers and fanciful birds. A colorful parrot, encircled in a grape vine, serves as the coverlet's focal point. Peacocks and other birds, as well as highly shaded floral sprays and sprigs, surround the central cartouche. On either side, a rippling pond with fish and ducks appears as a charming, yet unusual, motif. These diverse images come from many design sources of the period including needlework pattern books, botany and ornithology books, and engravings, as well as fabrics imported from India and China. The selection of motifs and their rendering reflect an interesting and sophisticated combination of colonial American and Eastern styles.

The sparse placement of embroidered elements, worked with a variety of stitches in wool threads, against the delicacy of the fine white linen background underscores its American origins. This characteristic of substantial voided space, in contrast to very dense English crewelwork, is a trait which has been attributed to the high cost of obtaining wool yarns in colonial America. A thorny vine bearing a profusion of carnations, roses, tulips, and patterned leaves twists around the borders—this undulating floral scroll is typical of American crewel embroidered petticoats, pockets and bed hangings.

Many needlework schools were established in America during the eighteenth century and the skills learned there played a significant role in a woman's life. But surviving crewelwork made during this period is rare, with most examples now housed in museum collections. This coverlet, in pristine condition, retains its rich and many colors; its simplicity signifies an important decorative style that defined the emerging aesthetics of colonial America.

85.5" H x 82.5" W

FLORAL BROCADED DRESS  
English, the dress, ca. 1760; the silk, ca. 1735

During most of the eighteenth century, women and men of means visually proclaimed their wealth and rank through opulent dress. Richly brocaded floral-patterned silks were immediate signifiers of high fashion and an elite lifestyle. Woven on drawlooms in limited quantities over a period of many weeks—hence their elevated cost—these silks represented a substantial investment on the part of the client.

In the early 1730s, an innovation in the preparatory drawings of silk designs allowed for painterly, three-dimensional depiction of motifs with sophisticated gradation of colors. Credited to Lyonnais designers who were widely regarded as leaders in the production of high-end silks, this naturalistic aesthetic was quickly adopted by their counterparts across the Channel in the London-based weaving center at Spitalfields. Increasingly large and vividly hued flowers, foliage, fruits, and other elements decorated the surfaces of woven silks, and were shown to particular advantage by the rounded feminine silhouette created by the pannier, or hooped petticoat. In this closed robe with a fitted back, the twisting sprays of realistically rendered blossoms and berries are shown at their peak, spreading their fully-opened petals and leaves with delicately curled edges. Against the pale mauve ground, overlapping wefts of bright red, pink, blue, citrus, and apple green are combined with muted shades of soft brown, peach and dusty rose, with outlines and details in black. When worn, the swaying skirt would have given the impression of a gently undulating floral parterre.

It was undoubtedly one of these luxuriant silks that Mary Pendarves (later Mary Delany), the scrupulous observer and recorder of court fashions, purchased to wear at a ball held to celebrate the wedding of the Princess Royal to the Prince of Orange in March 1734. In a letter to her sister, she identified the fabric of her gown as “a brocaded lustring, white ground with great rampant flowers in shades of purples, reds, and greens. I gave 13 shillings a yard; it looks better than it describes and will make a show.” For men and women in court circles, attendance at formal, public occasions demanded a suitably ostentatious display of finery and provided the opportunity for sartorial competition.

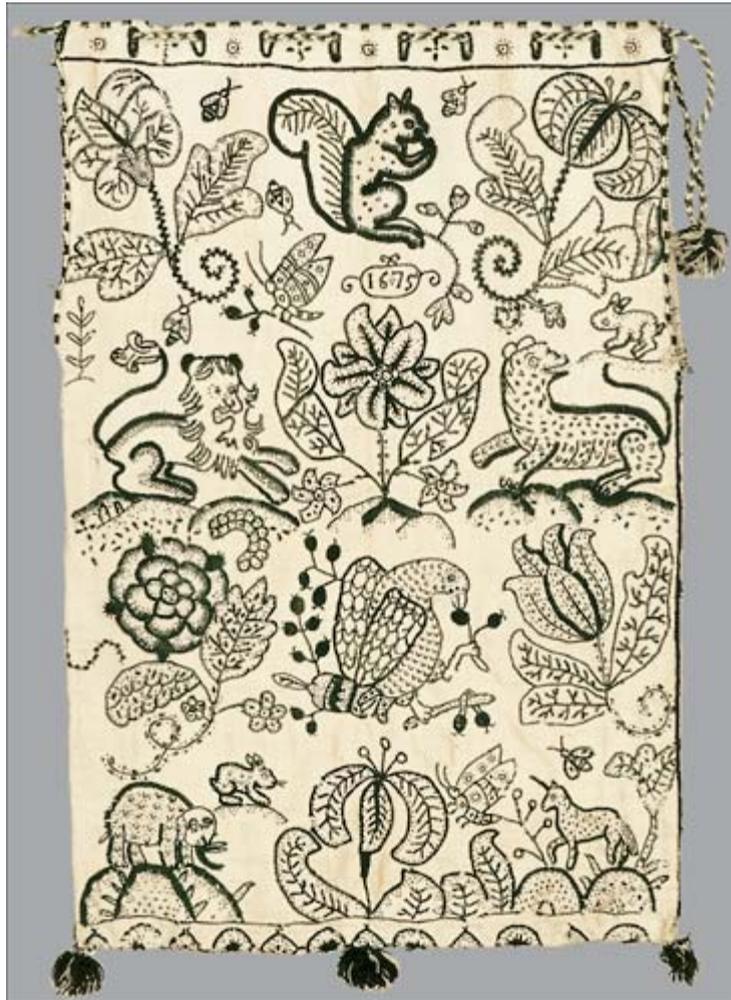
A number of factors—including the price of the fabric, its weight, the tightness of the weave as well as the scale of its pattern—ensured that there was minimal cutting on the part of the mantua-maker. The skirt is constructed from six selvage widths, carefully matched at the seams so that the pattern is continuous. In order to maximize the inherent value of such expensive silks, gowns were often altered at a later date. In this example, earlier pleat marks and stitching lines indicate that the dress was re-worked, primarily to narrow the back to a more up-to-date appearance. The wing cuffs, with metal weights sewn into the lining, date to the original incarnation of the dress. As an alternative to the more formal *robe à la française* with its loose pleats and separate petticoat, a one-piece gown with fitted back was especially popular among English women throughout most of the century.

This dress was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* (May 3–September 4, 2006).









CREWEL EMBROIDERED WORKBAG  
British, dated 1675

For the girl whose initials, E. L., mark this exceptional piece of seventeenth-century monochromatic embroidery, this workbag would have served as both an example of her proficiency in the year it was worked, 1675, as well as a useful reference for other needlework projects. Bold crewelwork designs, seen most often on bed hangings, were also applied to a variety of domestic articles such as clothing, cushions and workbags. Once completed, these bags would hold yarns, needles and tools, and possibly serve as inspiration for future needlework endeavors.

In this rare example, ornamented with a wonderful display of animals, the embroiderer's talents emerged from basic materials. She began with a rectangle of fustian, a twill fabric woven with a linen warp and a cotton weft, and wool threads of a single, deep-green hue. The spot motifs were drafted onto the fustian panel, each side mirroring the other except on the reverse where the date was replaced by the embroiderer's initials. Real and mythological creatures, drawn from bestiaries and needlework pattern books, dominate the composition; the leopard and lion, symbolic of British royalty, are prominently placed. Worked with fundamental embroidery stitches, thick outlines define the elephants, parrots, squirrels, unicorns, and rabbits, as well as the flowers and insects interspersed throughout. The panel was then doubled over and joined at the sides to form a pouch. Tassels and a corded drawstring finish the bag. Created over three hundred years ago as a decidedly practical yet decorative household object, this piece survives as one of the earliest known dated workbags.

27" H x 18" W



MUMMER'S COSTUME WITH WOOL APPLIQUÉS  
English (probably Yorkshire), dated 1829

This boldly graphic and visually playful mummer's costume is an especially rare surviving artifact of British folk tradition. Historians of British folklore date the rise of mummers' plays and sword dances to the eighteenth century and the height of their popularity to the second half of the nineteenth century. Both the publication of the short, rhyming texts that characterize mummers' plays and the growing interest in vernacular customs throughout the nineteenth century resulted in the widespread dissemination of this tradition. The plays and dances were performed at specific annual festivals, primarily between Christmas and Plough Monday (the first Monday after Twelfth Night). While mummers' plays were generally performed indoors within a local manor house or village pub, sword dances, which required more space, were held outside.

Three distinct but related types of plays dominated during this period: the Hero/Combat play, performed throughout most of Britain; the Recruiting Sergeant (or Wooing) Play, associated with the East Midlands; and the Sword Dance play, found primarily in Yorkshire and northeastern England. In all these regions, performances occurred in both larger towns and smaller, rural villages. Commonalities among the three types include some of the same stock characters—a Quack Doctor and a Fool—as well as fanciful costumes, both representational and non-representational, that served to partially disguise the male participants.

This loose-fitting, three-piece costume is of heavy, natural linen decorated with a variety of symmetrically arranged whimsical appliqués in dark and light blue, red, brown, and black felt, and trimmed with wool braids, fringes and white and silver lace. The disparate and disproportionately sized motifs that cover the pointed, tasseled cap, jacket and trousers include diamonds, hearts, dots, and diamond-and-heart clusters; stars, wheels, horses, and ducks; long-nosed, pipe-smoking male profiles; plump devils with pitchforks; and a spindly, flag-waving man balancing on one leg atop a cantering horse. The back of the cap displays the initials "T.F." (probably signifying "Tom Fool") and the date 1829, also in wool felt appliqué. The choice of motifs, their groupings and balanced placement reflect careful deliberation and originality; indeed, it was not uncommon for these costumes to be stored and re-used over a period of many decades.

In its components and decoration, the costume is most closely related to those worn by members of a sword dance group from Bellerby, Yorkshire. A published photograph of the group from about 1872 shows six dancers in matching elaborate, quasi-martial outfits and two other men—the "fools" or clown-like characters—in light-colored caps, loose jackets and trousers, all densely covered in appliqués that include geometric shapes and human figures. The motifs seen on this 1829 example illustrate the influence of historical, theatrical precedents, notably the Harlequinade, derived from the *Commedia dell'Arte* and widely popular in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, as well as familiar objects of nineteenth-century rural life. The inclusion of devil figures is unusual as the character of Beelzebub is generally associated with the Hero/Combat and Recruiting Sergeant plays, but it may be that the original wearer of this costume had particular reasons for emphasizing this motif. In the Sword Dance tradition, the amateur or semi-professional participants entertained their audiences with complex footwork and formations created by interlocking their metal or wood swords. According to an early nineteenth-century description of sword dancing in Yorkshire, "the *Toms* or *clowns*, dressed up as harlequins in the most fantastic modes [made] antic gestures and movements to amuse the spectators" (Stephen Corrsin, *Sword Dancing in Europe: A History* (1997), p. 197). At the end of a performance, the entire group would have boisterously solicited the crowd for money.

This costume is also related to an example dated to 1893, now in the Costume Museum, Nottingham. Known as the Cropwell Boy's Costume, from Cropwell, Nottinghamshire, and collected at that time by T. Fairman Ordish, an authority on British folk customs, the white linen shirt features red and black silk and wool patchwork silhouettes of farm animals, men, women, and ploughs.

The evident humor and decidedly jaunty appearance of this mummer's costume are fitting expressions of the revelry and gentle mischief-making in which working-class men and youths indulged during the cold, mid-winter months.





LACIS BETROTHAL PANEL  
German, 17th c.

Lacis, a netted structure of threads, is of ancient origin and was originally intended for specialized tasks such as fishing. During the Medieval and Renaissance periods in Europe, embroiderers appropriated lacis and elevated it from functional to purely decorative. Hand-knotted on frames, lacis panels were created either as horizontal grids or diamond-shaped meshes; these airy foundations were subsequently worked with a variety of stitches to form geometric or figural compositions.

Ornamented lacis was already a long established tradition in Germany by the seventeenth century; the earliest surviving fourteenth- and fifteenth-century examples are characterized by lozenge-patterned grounds, as in this piece made to commemorate a marriage. Here, the delicate network is formed of double-ply linen threads knotted at each intersection. Linked arm in arm and dressed in contemporary fashions, the bride and groom stand at center, symbolically joined by a heart. Angels supporting a large crown flank the couple; surrounding them are stylized branches with exotic fowl—peacocks, turkeys and crested hoopoes—arranged in mirror-image symmetry. Solid areas of the figures, crown and birds are worked in cloth stitch, a technique which relies on threads crossed horizontally and perpendicularly to imitate woven fabric. Filling stitches create checkerboard, zigzag, pinwheel, and honeycomb details with single-ply threads; thicker, twisted threads worked in darning stitch form the tracery outlines, the geometric borders and the tiny elements interspersed throughout the composition. Saw-tooth bobbin lace trims the edges.

A specific source for this lacis design remains enigmatic, yet there are visual clues which indicate an amalgam of inspirations. German publishers were among the earliest to print *modelbuchs*—pattern books—devoted to needlework and lace-making. Nicolas Bassée's 1568 *New Modelbuch*, published in Frankfurt on Main, illustrates patterns which could conform to the inherent geometric structure of lacis and might have provided ideas for the embroiderer of this panel. Naturalist studies of plants and animals were also popular design sources; the birds seen here were likely taken from illustrations in such books. However, the *trauschein*—a Germanic marriage record of the *fraktur* genre—is probably the most likely template in this case. Derived from illuminated manuscripts, *trauscheine* mix secular and religious motifs in a typically symmetrical format: the betrothed are encircled by flowers, birds, hearts, and stars, while confronted angels often lift a crown on high. In these marriage documents, the crown is sometimes accompanied by the written verse: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10) Thus, with the symbolic emphasis on devotion, this knotted, embellished thread adaptation of a *trauschein* would have been a very appropriate tribute to a joyous union.

See Margaret Simeon, *The History of Lace* (1979), plate 8, for a photograph of an identical lacis panel. Other similar examples are illustrated in Erich Meyer-Heisig, *Weberei Nadelwerk Zeugdruck* (1956), plates 68 and 69. The Art Institute of Chicago has a related piece in its collection (2008.168).

17.5" H x 28" W



*THE BOMBARDMENT OF ALGIERS*  
GLAZED ROLLER-PRINTED COTTON  
British, ca. 1816

This commemorative furnishing chintz depicting the British naval Bombardment of Algiers in 1816 attests to the many connections between the thriving printed cotton industry and nationalistic pride, trade and societal changes such as rising consumerism and the demand for novelty.

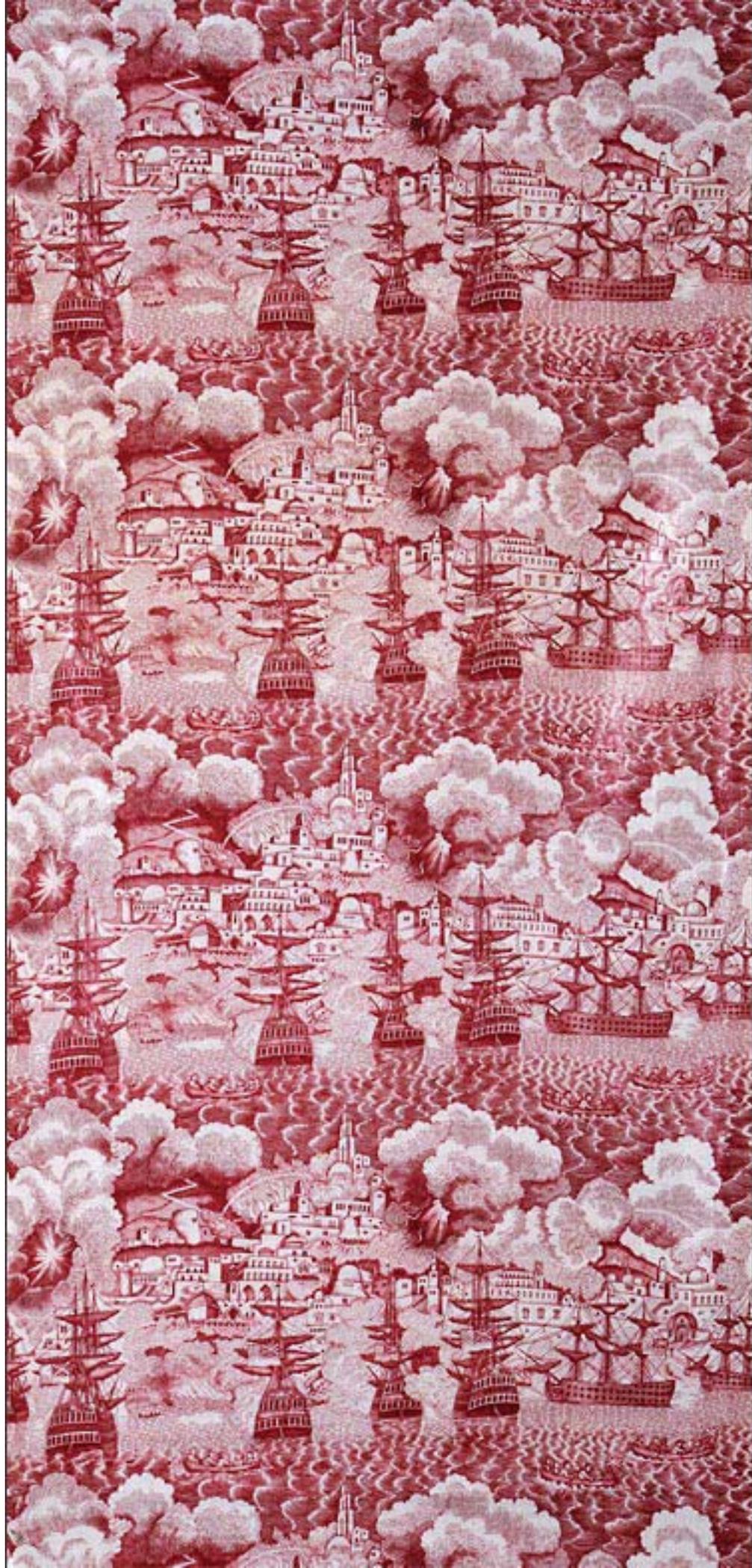
Mass production of printed cottons in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century was a key factor in the development of the Industrial Revolution. Within this phenomenon, the introduction of engraved rollers in 1783 was decisive in dramatically speeding up the printing process and simultaneously increasing output and lowering prices. Other innovations, including the use of waterpower for spinning and weaving and chlorine to bleach the cotton, impacted this important domestic industry, centered primarily in Lancashire. Manufacturers offered a wide range of goods to the burgeoning middle- and working-class markets, eager to furnish their interiors in the latest taste. Additionally, these purveyors capitalized on and deliberately spurred the demand for novelty with designs incorporating topical themes, often using published prints as sources of inspiration.

In this example, the monochromatic, densely packed short repeat—typical of roller prints of the period—portrays the height of the battle that took place between British and Algerian forces in late August 1816. The dominance of the British navy and its many victories in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—particularly with respect to the Napoleonic Wars—were widely celebrated in paintings, sculptures, prints, ceramics, and textiles. In this particular conflict, a British squadron under the command of Admiral Sir Edward Pelligrew arrived in Algiers to secure the release of the British Consul and 1,000 Christian slaves held by the Dey. Following the victory of the British fleet, numerous artists commemorated the dramatic nighttime battle. In 1817, James Jenkins, a London-based publisher, issued a substantial volume of hand-colored aquatints illustrating important British naval engagements between 1793 and 1816. The last print in the series, engraved by Thomas Sutherland (1785–1838) after paintings by a well-known marine artist, Thomas Whitcombe (1752–1824), depicts the Bombardment of Algiers under moonlit skies. While not an exact copy, it is likely that this chintz was inspired by Sutherland’s image as well as other print sources. Warships flying the Union Jack, shell bursts, clouds, lightning bolts, lifeboats with sailors, rippling waves, and the domed buildings of Algiers appear in both Sutherland’s aquatint and the printed cotton. The text accompanying Jenkins’ plate extols “...the magnanimous heroism displayed on this great occasion [that] will forever claim the gratitude and admiration of a generous country.”

Found in New England, this chintz highlights the continued trade between Britain and the young American Republic following the Revolution. In the second decade of the nineteenth century, the American textile industry was still in its early days, and British cottons—plentiful and relatively inexpensive—were in high demand for household furnishings.

A panel of *The Bombardment of Algiers* is in the collection of The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (ZBA4549).

108" L x 23" W



CASTELO BRANCO COVERLET  
Portuguese, 18th c.

In Portugal, the textile tradition of embroidered *colchas*, or coverlets, is firmly associated with the town of Castelo Branco in the Beira-Baixa region. Domestic production of these distinctive bed furnishings began in the second half of the seventeenth century and reached its height in the following century. The materials used to create *colchas*—flax and silk—were cultivated locally, facilitating their manufacture and popularity. Although Castelo Branco coverlets demonstrate a shared sensibility and needlework techniques, each piece is nonetheless unique.

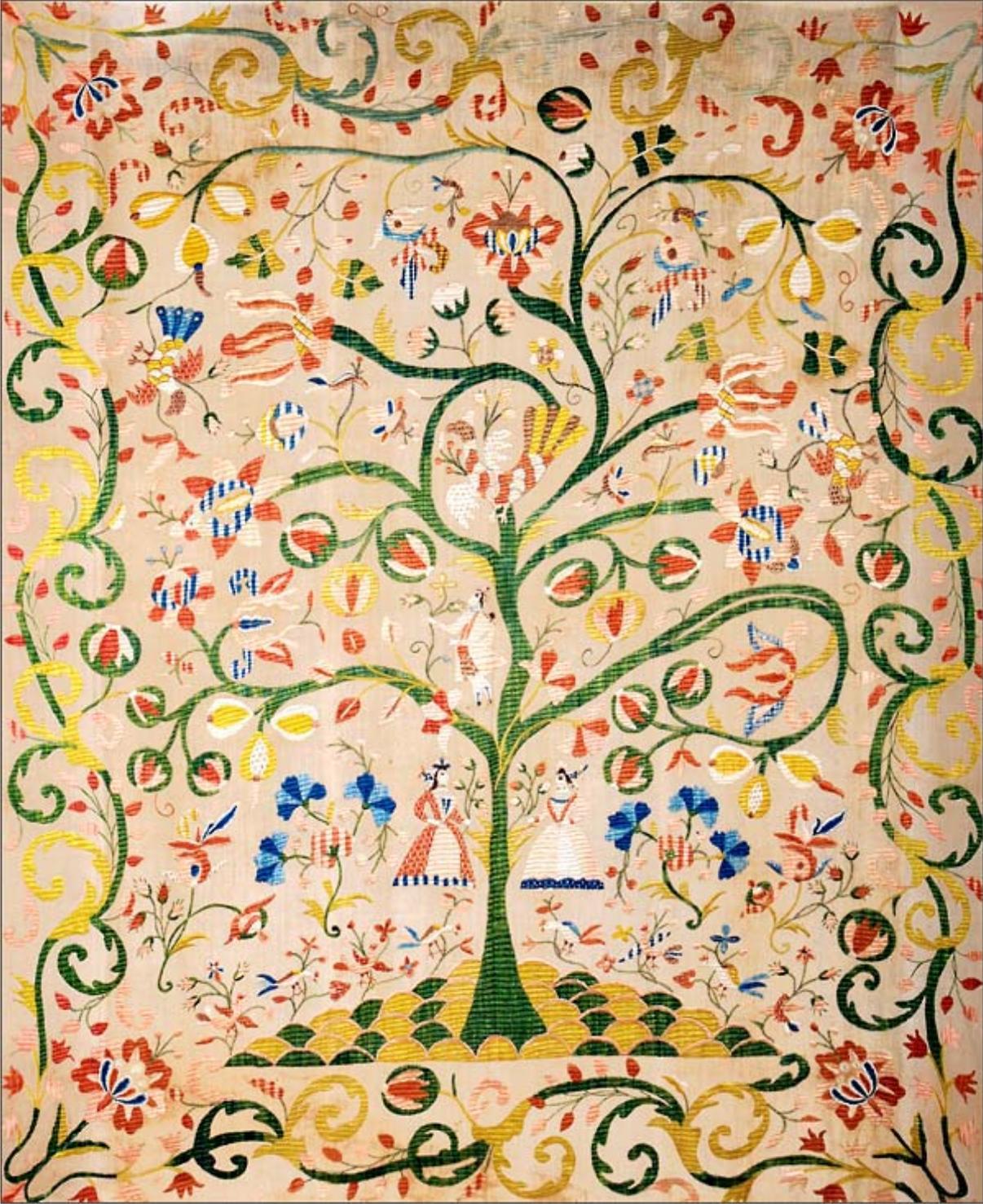
This particularly refined *colcha* illustrates Portugal's long and well-established relationship with the East in its blending of exotic elements with Western taste and embroidery style. A central Tree of Life dominates the composition with attenuated, sinuous branches that curl across the surface, laden with oversized flowers and fruits—pomegranates, tulips, carnations, lilies, and roses—both Asian and European. Figures in fashionable eighteenth-century dress depicting the Senses often appear in *colchas*, either singly or in pairs of women or a man and a woman. Here, the representation of Smell by three figures is unusual. In addition to the two women flanking the tree, each tilting a flower towards her face, is a solitary man, hovering above them and blissfully enjoying the scent of the bud in his hand. A large, proud peacock, with its tail unfolded, perches at the top of the trunk within a scrolling branch, while at either side another peacock swoops downward with feet outstretched. Smaller birds flit among the branches while several alight on delicate sprays growing from the imbricated mound at the foot of the tree. A luxuriant, serpentine floral, fruit and foliate trail decorates the borders. Beyond their strong visual appeal, the Tree of Life and peacock may also have conveyed Christian symbolic meaning. In their overall design and motifs, *colchas* relate to Indian palampores known to the Portuguese through trade.

The three discreetly joined widths of linen are worked with silk floss in a variety of stitches including tied laidwork and satin for the tree, fruits, blossoms, and figures; stem and feather for the floral and bud stems; herringbone for the figures' lace-like neckwear; and eyelet for foliage details. The fresh palette elegantly harmonizes bright green, blue and yellow with subtle shades of pale pink, blue, peach, and cinnamon.

Referred to as *filhas dilectas*, or beloved daughters, by the women who made them, eighteenth-century *colchas* were cherished family objects. In the early twentieth century, they were taken out only at festivals and prominently displayed from balconies and windows.

Similar *colchas* are illustrated in Clara Vaz Pinto, *Colchas de Castelo Branco* (1993), pp. 78, 81, 84-5.

86"H x 70.5"W



STENCILED-AND-PAINTED COTTON PANEL  
British, ca. 1840s

The rising interest in botany and horticulture in the nineteenth century and Victorian notions of proper female accomplishment are colorfully displayed in this singular stenciled-and-painted panel. By the early decades of the century, both gardening and the nursery trade were thriving commercial forces. Manuals, treatises, seed catalogues, botanical illustrations, and periodicals offering a wealth of information and advice on topics related to these pursuits targeted an audience of specialists and amateurs alike. During this period of increasing urbanization and industrialization, as well as scientific exploration and empirical study, the garden offered respite, beauty and the opportunity to show off the most fashionable specimens. At the same time, in the context of hardening notions of gender roles, both gardening and botanical painting were deemed particularly appropriate for women. Numerous publications informed the “softer sex” on how to design, plant and maintain gardens; one small guide of 1836, for example, equated a well-tended garden—the responsibility of the wife—with a happy marriage. In addition to a thorough familiarity with ornamental flora and their cultivation, women of the leisured classes were expected to be skilled in the arts of drawing and painting the “beauties of nature.” Beginning in the late eighteenth century, instruction manuals appeared, some with illustrations in black and white to be colored at home, and well-known botanical illustrators included high-ranking and wealthy women among their pupils.

The artistically sensitive and talented woman who painted this panel, possibly a runner, depicted a variety of species that were widely popular in the 1830s and 1840s and often recommended in contemporary gardening books. In the symmetrical composition, thick, twining clusters of pink and blue morning glories amidst dense foliage form gentle mounds along the borders, while sprays of sweet peas, iris, bluebells, flax, roses, fuchsias, honeysuckle, geranium, aster, St. John’s Wort, and more morning glories fill the centers. The artist used both stenciling and painting in her meticulous rendering and shading of the flora. The morning glory blossoms and leaves are stenciled, while the stems connecting them and the abundant tendrils are painted; the sprays are either painted or stenciled, or done in combination. The insect denizens of this garden brought indoors—flitting Tortoiseshell butterflies, a damsel fly, an Eyed hawk-moth, a scarab beetle, a nectar-seeking bee and wasp, and creeping caterpillars—are all delicately painted. An English publication of 1829, *The Art of Drawing and Colouring from Nature, Flowers, Fruit, and Shells*, included a section on painting and stenciling on velvet, and featured illustrations of many of the flowers seen here as possible subjects of study.

The most intriguing aspect of this piece is the inclusion of words and phrases, in both English and French, disguised among the curlicue tendrils of the morning glories—a clever, if deliberately inaccurate, botanical conceit. Hidden along one side of the panel, the slender shoots spell out: “Dear me,” “ma chere,” “courage,” “My Eye,” “where the bee sucks there suck I,” “quite comme il faut, n’est-ce pas? oui,” “J’en suis fatigued,” “Elizabeth,” “E Smith,” “fine,” “very well done,” and, in the center, “Finis.” Nestled among the phrases and foliage are two tiny, women’s faces framed by dark, curling tresses, an eye, and diminutive figures including a horse and rider, a cow, a dog, a cat, and a piglet, some identified by name.

It is tempting to conjecture that the piece was intended as a token of affection to another woman. Although difficult to determine, it is possible that the selection or combination of blossoms express the highly developed symbolic language of flowers that characterized the overt sentimentality of the Victorian period. Although their meanings vary among the many published texts, honeysuckle was often equated with bonds of love, bluebells with constancy or gratitude, sweet peas with attachment or departure, aster with variety, morning glory with uncertainty, and fuchsia with confiding love. Whether given away or kept by the artist—perhaps “E Smith”—the exceptional condition of the panel, including the intact details on the insects, indicate that it was little used, if at all. Working within the expectations and limitations of mid-nineteenth century feminine gentility, she created a vividly beautiful textile that was rightfully treasured.

Provenance: Ex-collection Tasha Tudor.

74.5”H x 23.5”W





*Maik...*

*E. Smith*

*very well done*

*Ed Smith*

*very well done*

## WOMEN'S SHOES OF FIGURED SILK SATIN English, ca. 1740s–50s

Shoes are an invention of necessity, designed to protect feet from the elements. Over the centuries, women's footwear has taken on a vast spectrum of forms, proving that sartorial display has been a motivation that often surpassed practicality. As accessories of luxurious materials and expert construction, these mid-eighteenth-century silk shoes epitomize the delicacy and opulence of feminine wardrobes of the Rococo age.

Though elegant, high-heeled French models were the pinnacle of fashionable footwear throughout most of Europe, they were decried in England as frivolous and overly sensual—even indecent. English women often preferred more comfortable styles, especially with regard to heel shape and height. These shoes have relatively low, curved heels with gracefully proportioned waists which correspond to English sensibilities. Though more stable and maneuverable than spindly French heels, much of the ease of low heels still mattered on placement: if set too far under the instep, or sloped at an abrupt angle, the foot might slip backwards causing damage to the back quarters or, worse, bodily harm. In 1753, an English fashion publication humorously cautioned against Francophilic choices in footwear: "Mount on French Heels when you go to the Ball, 'tis the fashion to totter and show you can fall." Perhaps evidence of the original wearer's preference to reserve them for special occasions, these shoes are in immaculate condition.

Several notable features of eighteenth-century shoe design are seen here. As was most footwear of the century, these are fashioned as "straights"—made to conform to either foot, without left or right definition. Because the suppleness of woven fabrics (in this case, figured silk satin for the exteriors and plain-weave linen for the linings) allowed shoes to mold to the shape of the foot, switching between either side on a regular basis was one way to avoid excessive wear. White kid rands—slender strips of leather inserted between the uppers and the soles—were prominent from the end of the seventeenth century until the 1760s. Yellow ribbon binds the tongues, the upper edges of the quarters, the dog-leg seams and the latches. By mid-century, latches had slipped to a lower position on the vamps so that larger, more extravagant buckles could be displayed.

Though the gently rounded toes are specific to English shoes of the 1740s–50s, the silk dates to the 1710s. Still suitably rich, and certainly too expensive to cast off, the reuse of earlier, outdated silks for mid-century shoes was common. Because the emphasis was on harmonizing colors rather than matching materials, sumptuous fabrics recycled this way ensured that shoes could coordinate with many different gowns. This particular silk—ivory satin with a stylized yellow pattern of overlapping rings, spiky foliate motifs with curlicue flourishes and fan-shaped flowers studded with tiny stars enclosed within crenellated medallions—is reminiscent of Bizarre patterns drawn by Spitalfields designer and weaver James Leman. A comparable pair of shoes, with similar mid-century features made from an early-eighteenth-century silk, is in the Victoria & Albert Museum collection (T.443&A-1913).





PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON PANEL  
Indian Export for the Siamese Market, 18th–19th c.

Created “in the fashion of Siam,” this chintz illustrates the remarkable achievements of Indian textile artisans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. High quality mordant-dyed cottons were made for Eastern and Western markets; the panel seen here was exported to neighboring Siam (now known as Thailand). There was great demand from the palace courts of Siam for these finely painted cloths—chintzes were not only worn as garments but also used for furnishings.

Painted-and-dyed textiles produced in India for Siamese royal patrons undoubtedly followed strict musters. Many incorporate motifs of Buddhist origin such as celestial figures and animals. Seen here, white *devas*—angel-like figures with their hands folded and pointed upward—are enveloped by purple palmettes set against a dark red ground. Deep plum-and-white spotted *nagas*, or snakes, form a lattice pattern around the ogival leaves. Below each palmette appears a small mythical figure with a pointed crown called a *kirrtimukha*. The contrasting shades of the paler red *kirrtimukha* and the rich, saturated red ground make the figures simultaneously stand out from and recede into the background, a surprising visual effect that was intentional. Borders of flame-like motifs, scrolling foliage and floral medallions painted in the same tones complete the precisely rendered pattern.

As an expression of piousness, members of the court often gifted their highly desirable imported Indian cottons to local Buddhist temples. Within the context of such sacred spaces, chintzes were displayed as banners and used as altar cloths or floor spreads. A sturdy piece of plain fabric sewn to the reverse suggests that this panel may have been used as a wall hanging; it is likely that this piece was cut from a long, rectangular skirt called a *pha nung*. Textiles as intricate as this were included in diplomatic exchanges to foreign leaders as impressive representations of the kingdom’s wealth.

This fine example was formerly in the collection of Dr. Henry Ginsburg (1940–2007), curator of Thai and Cambodian collections for the British Library from 1973 to 2003. A renowned scholar and connoisseur, Dr. Ginsburg collected rare and unusual eighteenth- and nineteenth-century chintzes made in India for Southeast Asian markets. Dr. Ginsburg shared his expertise on Thai manuscripts through his academic publications; his passion for textiles, however, was a very personal aspect of his intellectual pursuits.

An eighteenth-century *pha nung* fragment of identical design is in the Tapi Collection (01.200) and illustrated in Deepika Shah, *Masters of the Cloth* (2005), p. 28, figure 24; a related example is in the Victoria & Albert Museum collection (IS.58-1991), pictured in John Guy, *Woven Cargoes: Indian Textiles in the East* (1998), p. 129, figure 170.

51” H x 41” W



## FLORAL BROCADED SILK SATIN Chinese Export for the English Market, 1830s

By the nineteenth century, imported Chinese silks were a familiar addition to household and clothing inventories for the English aristocracy and upper classes. Goods made for export to England could be bought from the various Customs Houses near the docks where China trade ships came to anchor. In the 1830s, the sixth Duke of Devonshire (1790–1858) bought sufficient bolts of Chinese silk from one such Custom House to furnish some of the grand salons at his Chatsworth estate in Derbyshire. This impressive, upholstery-weight brocaded silk—identical in design to that purchased by the Duke for Chatsworth—draws attention to the vogue for furnishing interiors in the Chinese taste.

Curtains of this dramatic silk were hung at Chatsworth in 1839, first in the Library; soon after, the draperies were reinstalled in the Yellow Drawing Room and matching cornices were placed in the Dining Room. Extra cornices from this furnishing scheme were removed to Devonshire House in London. Writing in his 1844 handbook, the Duke described the silk as Indian: “More Indian silk, yellow, bought at the Custom House at the same time as the red” and “The curtains here as well as in the dining room are made of Indian silk.” It was not unusual for Europeans to mistake the origins of Eastern materials, especially since silks came from both China and India. Traders brought goods from several Oriental ports, and since India was typically the last country where fresh purchases were loaded it was common to attribute many imports to that country. In her book *Chatsworth: The House* (2002), p. 173, the current dowager Duchess of Devonshire states that a past housekeeper kept a fragment of this particular silk which had Chinese characters printed on the back.

Rare in its survival as a partial bolt, this brilliant yellow satin is woven with a design resembling Chinese floral patterns popular during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), when it was customary to have rows of flowerheads, opposing one another in direction, laid out in offset repeats. Here, alternating rows of pink lotus and peony blossoms are separated by smaller pink and blue flowers, all growing from curling, leafy green stems. Many nineteenth-century Chinese silks were also closely modeled on those of the Qianlong period (1736–95), when the finest brocades were provided for the court by the imperial Jiangning Weaving Bureau. While it was not possible for Westerners to buy from royal manufactories, there were other weaving centers in southern China, especially at Hangzhou and Suzhou, which would supply foreign orders.

A direct comparison of the pattern can be seen in a bolt of blue silk satin with velvet flowers and foliage dating to the Qianlong period, now in the Palace Museum, Beijing, illustrated in *Textiles and Embroideries of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, from The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum* (2005), volume 50, plate 28.

518" H x 29.5" W



## BROCADED AND SELF-FIGURED SILK SATIN Continental, late 17th c.

Historically, silks have been the most expensive fabrics to produce and procure. Types of silks and their corresponding prices were wide ranging, with plain or simply patterned weaves being the most affordable in contrast to those of grand design made with complex weave structures and lavish materials. During the second half of the seventeenth century, Europeans were becoming increasingly wealthy and this new-found prosperity brought about a growing demand for silks and other luxury wares especially in the successful merchant and professional classes.

This late-seventeenth-century satin, with self-figured sprigs and metallic brocaded foliate motifs, represents the middle ground between the most complicated, costly weavings and the most economical choices available at the time. It is exactly the type of silk which would have appealed to a prosperous, non-aristocratic consumer. The pattern of isolated motifs which form distinct horizontal and diagonal lines looks back to earlier seventeenth-century silk designs characterized by tightly packed, offset rows of flowers. Here, ample space is given to the dominant silver and silver-gilt metallic leaves, which in their heavy proportions and twisted curls resemble the outsized foliage depicted in English crewelwork and Indian palampores so popular in the Baroque period. Depth is subtly implied through the addition of white and salmon floral-and-foliage sprigs which sprout from behind both the small and large metallic motifs. A variation on damask sub-patterning, these flush-effect sprigs—formed by short lengths of floating wefts—support the principal elements and thrust them to the surface. Concentrating the areas of expensive metallic thread and weaving them in discontinuous brocade technique avoided any wasted material; this was typical even at the highest levels of silk weaving. The luminous salmon-pink color, often called carnation in the period, was extremely fashionable.

Though sufficiently rich looking and attractively designed, this length of silk was most likely produced by one of the many small weaving centers that existed throughout the continent. Most European countries looked to France as the supreme arbiter of style, and the Lyon and Tours silk industries created the most desirable fabrics. Entrepreneurs in England, Spain, Italy, Sweden, and Holland did their best to copy French silks as they were introduced to the market, and the example seen here best fits into this formula of opportunism.

70.5" H x 20.5" W (detail shown)





TÄPPAN  
WOOL TAPESTRY PANEL BY MÄRTA MÅÅS-FJETTERSTRÖM  
Designed in 1931; woven before 1941

The distinctive modernist style of Märta Måås-Fjetterström (1873–1941), a prominent early-twentieth-century Swedish textile artist, spanned centuries and geography. After graduating from what is now the College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Måås-Fjetterström oversaw textile production at various handcraft associations devoted to recreating traditional Swedish folk art tapestries, which clearly informed her artistic output. As a result of exposure to non-Western decorative arts, her design vocabulary also incorporated many features of Asian derivation. In 1919, Måås-Fjetterström opened her own atelier in Båstad—there, she freed herself from the conservative textile workshops which disapproved of her aesthetic choices. Måås-Fjetterström’s signature blend of Scandinavian and Eastern sensibilities would come to define her most dynamic works.

*Täppan* represents this particular confluence of regional and exotic tastes. Tapestry weaving had thrived in Sweden since the sixteenth century, when Flemish weavers were brought in to create hangings for the royal palace. These large-scale floral tapestries were subsequently interpreted by peasant weavers; in transition from professional workshops to home craft, naïve charm and simplification replaced stately magnificence. Måås-Fjetterström was greatly influenced by such weavings, yet at the same time she sought inspiration from other cultures. The Asian and Near Eastern textiles on view at the 1897 Stockholm World Fair made an indelible impression on the young artist, as did the diverse collections of European museums she visited. Depicting a small flower bed after which it is named, *Täppan* is woven from soft wool yarns in a subtle palette of variegated, muted hues. Interlocked tapestry technique allows for precise rendering of the angular buds, stalks and chevron-patterned grass and soil patch. The dense arrangement of isolated floral motifs references antique Flemish *millefleurs* tapestries and humbler Swedish interpretations, but also the stylized flowers—tulips, irises, lilies, and carnations, all seen here—characteristic of many Persian and Indian carpets.

The Stockholm Exhibition of 1930 was a pivotal moment for Måås-Fjetterström, as her artistic inclinations aligned with the emerging Functionalist Art Deco movement. From this time onwards, Måås-Fjetterström’s designs were increasingly strong yet simple, fusing traditional, oriental and modernist influences into a unified, highly personal style. In 1934, Swedish art critic Erik Wettergren said of Måås-Fjetterström: “This industrious weaver is a remarkable storyteller, who finds her inspiration in legends and meadows, in the Orient and the North, in ancient beliefs and fresh green leaves...” He, along with members of Swedish royalty, was responsible for reinstating Måås-Fjetterström’s workshop after her death. Her studio is still active; weavings made during Måås-Fjetterström’s lifetime are distinguished from later weavings by the simple signature “MMF.”

26" H x 50.5" W

TIMBUCTOU  
DRESS BY PAUL POIRET  
French, 1923

“The high art of dressmaking consists precisely in developing the individuality of each woman.”  
— Paul Poiret, *King of Fashion* (1931)

One of the twentieth century’s preeminent *haute couturiers*, Paul Poiret (1879–1944) is celebrated for his inventiveness, artistic vision and eagerness to break with the status quo in feminine dress. Two characteristics best define his oeuvre, both seemingly at odds with each other yet utterly inextricable: a tendency towards the theatrical and exotic, and a simultaneous preference for stripped-down simplicity of form. Chief among his myriad inspirations was Denise Boulet, his muse and wife; Poiret made this unique day dress—titled *Timbuctou*—for her personal wardrobe. Not only does it represent his symbiotic relationship with Denise and his keen understanding of her individualism, it also highlights one of the most distinctive aspects of Poiret’s creations for her: the repurposing of antique, ethnographic textiles to fashion exceptionally avant-garde garments.

Poiret opened his first *maison de couture* in 1903, and from the very start he eschewed conventional dressmaking. He abandoned corsetry and petticoats in favor of a more natural shape; this relaxed new silhouette was well-matched by his penchant for overt exoticism. Ancient and non-Western garments—all composed of flat planes of fabric, assembled in ways that drape fluidly over the body—compelled Poiret to re-envision the modern woman’s wardrobe. In 1905, Poiret and Denise Boulet were married; he had started designing for her during their engagement and would continue to until their divorce in 1928. Poiret boasted to *Vogue* magazine in 1913 that: “My wife is the inspiration for all my creations, she is the expression of all my ideals.” Indeed, Denise’s slim physique served as the prototypic template for his columnar dresses. Creations made exclusively for her show the limitless bounds of Poiret’s creativity, and afforded him opportunities to use unconventional materials that would not suit his paying clientele. *Timbuctou*—evocatively named but not accurately documenting the geographical source of the cloth from which it is made—is a simple, sleeveless sheath minimally tailored by darts concealed along the sides. Constructed from a strip-woven cotton wrapper of West African origin (most likely made by the Sherbo, Mende or Vai people of Sierra Leone), the dress reflects both Poirets’ sense of adventurousness and free-spirited inclinations.

*Timbuctou* also comments on prevailing cultural aesthetics in post-World War I Paris. Primitivism and Negritude—terms referring to the intense interest of modern artists in tribal arts and fascination with African-American jazz-age culture, respectively—resonated with French Moderne design. A 1918 trip to Morocco inspired Poiret to develop Bedouin-style woolen fabrics with the Parisian weaving firm Rodier; another African sojourn supplied the couturier with a North African *abaya* which he remodeled into a coat for Denise in 1920. Though it is uncertain where Poiret purchased the vividly patterned cloth from which *Timbuctou* is made, it is possible that he discovered it himself on one of his African journeys.

Provenance: From the personal wardrobe of Denise Boulet-Poiret, descended through their son, Colin Poiret.



*HORSES*  
SCREEN-PRINTED COTTON BY SAUL STEINBERG  
American, ca. 1949–52

Romanian-born Saul Steinberg (1914–1999) is perhaps one of America’s most renowned illustrators. Steinberg’s inimitable graphic style traversed media and movements with unparalleled ease; consistent yet unpredictable, his artwork—whether drawings, paintings, prints, or collages—defies categorization as it negotiates complexities of humor, satire and social commentary through both fine and commercial arts. His association with *The New Yorker*, which began in 1941 and yielded more than 1,200 illustrations for the erudite magazine, established Steinberg as an influential force in the American art world. Steinberg’s signature style, conspicuous because of the frequency with which his illustrations appeared on *The New Yorker* covers, caught on quickly. His first New York solo exhibition was held in 1943; three years later, Steinberg was selected for “Fourteen Americans,” the Museum of Modern Art’s showcase of national talent. In 1949, he painted a mural and illustrated the catalogue for “An Exhibition for Modern Living,” Alexander Girard’s landmark installation of modernist interior design at the Detroit Institute of Arts and J.L. Hudson department store. Steinberg’s inclusion among designers like Girard, Charles and Ray Eames, and Florence Knoll—all well-known for their work in textiles—ensured his success in design industries as a cross-over phenomenon.

Once his style and name had become draws, Steinberg was approached by home furnishing companies interested in reproducing his witty artwork on their products. Though he rejected many proposals, from 1949 through the mid-1950s Steinberg supplied designs on a fee-and-royalty basis to Patterson Fabrics, New York. A series of quirky, pictorial prints—*Views of Paris*, *Wedding Picture*, *Cowboys*, and *Horses*, to name a few—were printed on drapery fabrics and wallpaper. A quintessential example of his energetic precision and comical observations, *Horses* is a Steinberg illustration not on paper, but on a cotton which—with its crisp, polished surface—mimics the semi-gloss finish of a magazine page.

The cheerfully rhythmic pattern repeat is composed in four distinct registers. A row of glass-domed and mansard-roofed pavilions, accented with curlicue finials and equestrian statues, forms the only suggestion of a fixed horizon line; in front, tiny horses with riders and horse-drawn carriages rush about. To the right of this bustling scene, a dignified gentleman and little girl ride boxy horses whose legs mingle together underneath their bodies. Above is a plump-bodied horse with a dog—seated precariously on its rump—holding the reins and a crop in his mouth; this duo confronts two phalanxes of mounted soldiers, receding single-file into the distance, led in charge by a fearless commander. The topmost registers feature a hunting party accompanied by enthusiastic hounds; a rotund, prancing steed and rider shaded with cross-hatching; an equestrian jumper and diminutive trick-rider; and a sulky carriage manned by a strict-looking driver, pulled by a horse of bulky, exaggerated proportions. Judicious splashes of bright color heighten the design, but it is Steinberg’s fanciful, expressive brush- and line-work that make *Horses* so lively—the pressure of the artist’s hand, the elasticity of his pen’s nib are sensed throughout.

A black-and-white sidewall panel of *Horses* is in the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum collection (1952-34-3).

108" H x 37.5" W





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