

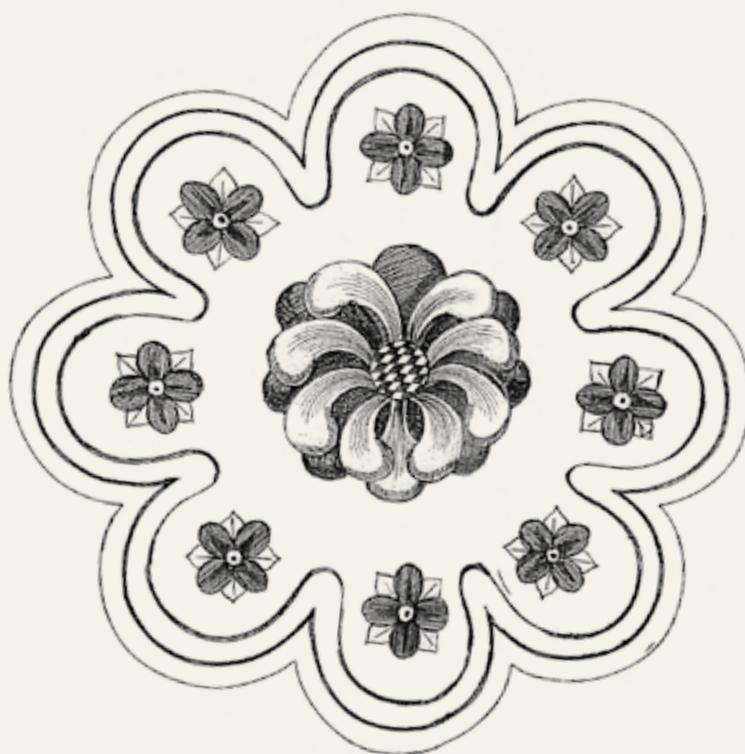
# CORA GINSBURG

Costume • Textiles • Needlework



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Winter 2005

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SILK EMBROIDERED LINEN PANEL  
 German (Lower Saxony), mid-15th century

A distinctive type of silk on linen embroidered hanging was a well-known specialty of Lower Saxony from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Made for both ecclesiastical and secular use, these hangings are characterized by several features: a compositional format comprising vertical and horizontal rows of squares with repeating vignettes in primary colors; delicate, slightly naïve figures; scrolling foliage, and geometric patterning and bands. This extremely rare late medieval panel relates to a group within this larger category of embroideries that date to the mid-fifteenth century and depict courtly figures in allegorical scenes.

Each of the two squares presents a garden setting with a woman holding a leashed dog threatened by a winged dragon and a man with a falcon perched on his raised hand. The man at the right also holds a diminutive, tethered dragon. The intertwined leafy branches that form a canopy over the figures and animals relate to the ornate vegetal decoration seen in illuminated manuscript borders of the late Gothic period; at the lower edge is a wattle fence, a familiar enclosure in the medieval garden. Both women wear high-waisted, pendant-sleeved gowns, while the men wear flared, knee-length robes with mismatched hose. Parti-colored garments, seen on the figures at the left, were fashionable from the thirteenth to the early fifteenth century. Geometric forms, such as the diaper patterning in the costumes of the couple at the right, were part of the medieval decorative vocabulary. The meaning of the imagery on this panel cannot be definitively interpreted, but the dog and dragon and their interaction may well symbolize moral attributes and themes. In *Webereien und Stickereien des Mittelalters* (1964), textile historian Ruth Grönwoldt suggests that a conflict between virtue and vice may be the subject of a similar embroidery dating to the same period in the collection of the Kestner Museum, Hannover (plate 52, Inv. 5270), in which a woman holds a chained dog. As a locus in visual and literary representations, the garden itself often held symbolic significance.

The motifs are worked in a combination of Gobelin and surface satin stitches in polychrome silk floss and two-ply white linen thread on a painted red ground. A fiber that is inherently difficult to dye, linen was sometimes colored by the surface application of a pigment during this period. Finely painted details on the faces and hands enhance the elegantly dressed, attenuated figures.

This fragment is identical to a larger piece in the collection of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (T-15 401), illustrated in *Niedersächsische Bildstickereien des Mittelalters*, Renate Kroos (1970), plate 414, and very similar to one in the collection of the former Schloss-Museum, Berlin, illustrated in *Deutsche Textilkunst*, Renate Jaques (1942), plate 134a. The close relationship amongst these various examples in terms of technique, coloration and imagery suggests that they may have been produced in workshops in the same region.

Provenance: Ex-collection Emma-Henriette Schiff von Suvero. Deaccessioned from the Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, in 2003.

11" H x 25" W





REDWORK WORKBAG  
British, dated 1669

This seventeenth-century workbag, embroidered by a ten-year-old British schoolgirl with the initials I. S., survives in near pristine condition as an extraordinary example of a young girl's talent for needlework. Prior to attempting a more complicated task such as embellishing a workbag (used to hold threads and sewing implements), a girl being trained in the domestic needle arts would have first practiced by making a sampler. The types of patterns and motifs worked on this bag in double running stitch in single-ply wool on a fustian ground appear consistently on spot and band samplers throughout the seventeenth century. While compilations of patterns used for needlework, such as Richard Shorleyker's *A Schole-House for the Needle* (1632), provided embroiderers with examples of animals, plants and geometric designs, motifs worked in double running stitch were typically passed from embroiderer to embroiderer. The designs on this workbag reflect the ongoing exchange of British, Italian and German embroidery patterns throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: small insects, leaping deer and dogs reflect contemporary British needlework, as seen on a shirt with related animals in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (T.2-1956); the border and medallions derive from Italian embroidery; and the corner motifs occur on German samplers and handkerchiefs of the period.

The selection of these motifs for a workbag illustrates both the young girl's proficiency and sophisticated design sense. Rather than arranging motifs randomly, as is typical of needlework of this period, the symmetrical composition reflects an unexpected formality in the work of a schoolgirl. Her carefully organized arrangement of disparate elements—animals both realistic and mythological, borders combining floral and geometric elements, intricate medallions, and figures known as "boxers"—covers the surfaces of both sides of the bag in a deliberate yet completely charming manner.

Finely executed red wool and white linen tassels and cording complete this workbag. Specialized pattern books devoted entirely to the plaiting of cords were published in the early seventeenth century, allowing for their domestic production. The bi-color drawstrings may have been created with a small lyre-shaped instrument called a lucette.

The workmanship and design of this bag by young I.S. surpass any known related examples. Each side of the workbag offers a richness of imagery from frogs and jumping fish to snails and centipedes, from stags to gryphons, and from the expected to the unexpected.

18. 5" H x 24" W







PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON PALAMPORE  
Indian (Coromandel Coast) for the British or  
American Market,  
early 18th century

Among the most renowned of eighteenth-century export textiles are Indian painted-and-dyed cottons. Production of chintz was prolific and reflected a unique relationship between trade and design exchange; the ability of Indian craftsmen to adapt their skills and artistic vocabularies to diverse clientele contributed to the fabric's popularity abroad. Indian painted cottons were highly prized in Europe and elsewhere for their brilliant, colorfast properties. An exceptionally laborious technique, chintz-making involved a complex sequence that could often take months to complete; however, this painstaking method allowed for the subtle shading, saturated hues and elegant delineations that are hallmarks of this textile art.

For household furnishings, the most prevalent type of chintz was the palampore, a rectangular panel of typically large proportions. Most often used as coverlets, palampores were frequently designed to coordinate with sets of bed hangings or curtains. Demonstrating the confluence of Eastern exoticism with Western sensibilities, this early eighteenth-century example, elaborately painted against a distinctive twilled ground, combines a traditional Indian motif—the Tree of Life—with those of European inspiration. The central field has a gracefully disposed double-mounded design of bifurcated trees with sinuous branches and voluptuously colored blooms. Symmetrically arranged branches envelop a centered medallion formed by miniature vase motifs and palmettes, and blue and white flowering vases in the corners further augment the composition. The lush repertoire of flowers and foliage is characteristic of Indian export cottons: vigorously curling leaves, fantastical flowers derived from nature but with decidedly imaginary flourishes and the intricate infilling of these elements attest to the imagination and skill of Indian artisans.

Though the overall aesthetic of this palampore suggests a Dutch sensibility, an eighteenth-century East India Trading Company stamp found on the reverse confirms a British or American market destination. In fact, this example was found in America. Palampores with identical flowers, related motifs and compositional elements are illustrated in *Origins of Chintz*, John Irwin and Katherine B. Brett (1970), plates 9, 10 and 13, and *Indian Chintzes*, Ebelte Hartkamp-Jonxis (1994), numbers 5 and 9. This palampore is illustrated in *Folk Art in American Life*, Robert Bishop and Jacqueline Atkins (1995), plate 150.

112" H x 91" W





SET OF UNCUT PETIT POINT CHAIR PANELS  
French, second quarter of the 18th century

In early eighteenth-century France, a new emphasis on comfort and intimacy characterized the wealthy domestic interior in which upholstered seating furniture played an important role. The recently introduced *bergère*—a low, wide chair with closed arms—as well as the more traditional, open-armed *fauteuil* were to be found in salons where the art of conversation was a dominant feature of daily social life. *En suite* coverings for such furniture provided both visual interest and unity in a room's décor. Although a wide variety of woven and embroidered textiles embellished interior spaces, those intended for seating furniture needed to be especially sturdy. Petit point, or canvas work embroidery, was both efficient to produce and durable. Given the extensive wear on this type of furniture as well as changes in taste, it is unusual to find extant upholstery fabric in good condition; more remarkable is the survival of an unused, pristine set.

The robust design of these wool and silk chair panels would have made a bold statement. Stylistically, the brightly colored, large-scale flowering branches growing from small hillocks depicted on the seats and seatbacks relate to crewelwork bed hangings of the early eighteenth century as well as naturalistic silks of the 1730s and 1740s. The intensity of the shades of pinks, blue, green, mauve, and yellow attests to the well documented, contemporary taste for strong colors for furnishings. The full set comprises complete coverings for a *bergère* and four *fauteuils* including panels for the arm pads and borders with complementary motifs of large, single sprigs and continuous flowering branches.

During the eighteenth century, the *tapissier*, or upholsterer, was a key figure in planning the decorative scheme of an interior. The handwritten name "Mad. de [B?]risey," that appears on a small piece of paper tacked to one of the *fauteuil* seatbacks, is probably that of the client who commissioned these exuberant panels.



SWEET MEAT PURSE WITH PASTORAL SCENES  
British, ca. 1600–30

Luxury items *par excellence*, sweet meat purses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were valued for reasons both practical and extravagant. As decorative sachets—filled with powdered rose petals, perfumed batting or fragrant lavender—sweet meat purses were stored with clothing and linens in chests to repel vermin and impart a delicate scent. However, given as special offerings, sweet meat purses had a more elaborate significance. When presented to reigning monarchs on royal visits or similar occasions, such purses typically contained gold coins, sweet-smelling pomanders or other trinkets. Ornately embroidered purses, sometimes studded with pearls and gems, were often a considerable part of the cost of gifts, which may explain why so many were described in contemporary accounts. This exceptional sweet meat bag is similar in description to one given as a New Year’s gift to Queen Elizabeth I in 1588–89: “...ymbroidered all over with flowers, beasts & birds, of Venis gold, silver, silke.”

Though professional embroiderers undoubtedly made some sweet meat purses, this exquisite example, with deftly manipulated silk threads and impeccable artistic execution, was probably made by an extremely skilled amateur. The embroiderer, working in fine tent stitch on canvas, sensitively shaded the scenery and motifs to suggest depth and added shimmering striations of metallic silver to the sky. Bejeweled with vivid color, each side depicts a landscape with fruit trees and flowering shrubs. On one side, a doe nurses her fawn in an idyllic setting; a falcon perches below a tree laden with ripe pears, while a duck swims in a brook. The other side shows an impressive grapevine and hillocks replete with foxgloves, quince and bulbous gourds—the animal inhabitants of this tranquil scene are a coiled serpent and a recumbent leopard. Pastoral vignettes are unusual for small-scale purses—more common are formulaic designs of flowerheads on coiling stems or appliquéd slip motifs. The atypical subject matter depicted here closely relates to pictorial needlework of the period, further suggesting an imaginative amateur as the source for this remarkable sweet meat purse.

Illustrated in *Art of Embroidery*, Lanto Synge (2001), p. 113.

4.5” H x 5” W





## QUILTED COTTON BED COVER WITH CHINOISERIE FIGURES

French, late 17th century

Although providing warmth was the primary purpose of a quilted coverlet, its expansive surface offered the embroiderer's imagination scope for pictorial representation. Quilted coverlets were used in European upper-class households from the medieval period and, by the late seventeenth century, an elaborate quilted bed cover often took pride of place among furnishings in an important bedroom.

This rare example of an early quilted cotton coverlet demonstrates the West's enthusiastic response to Eastern trade goods that were imported throughout the seventeenth century and the vogue for chinoiserie that pervaded decorative arts in the period. The European conflation of things Chinese, Japanese and Indian into a single, exotic "Other," as well as the whimsicality associated with this aesthetic style, are particularly evident in the central vignette. An ostensibly Chinese figure sits in a howdah atop an elephant with splayed, elongated toes; hovering at either side are a winged chimera and an outsize butterfly. Other figures evoking the mysterious East are posed along the edge of the field and include a turbaned man with a lantern and a musician in a boat playing a trumpet-like instrument to admiring birds.

The quilt is made from two joined widths of fabric—a finely woven top cotton layer and a coarser linen backing—interlined with wool wadding and cording. The medallion and outer borders, with repeating design of stylized florals within scallops, are embroidered in white linen thread in backstitch with details in brick and filling stitches. The various figures, fleur-de-lys and flowerheads in the field are worked in pale taupe tussar silk thread, white linen thread and a plied blend of tussar silk and linen in similar stitches. Not purely decorative, the curvilinear stitching also serves to better secure the inner layer of wadding than would straight lines following the direction of the weave.

The fleur-de-lys motifs support a French origin for this splendid bed covering. Although a center of production cannot be firmly attributed, the technique of stuffed and corded whitework reflects the influence of a similar type of quilting long associated with the port city of Marseilles.

81" H x 65" W







RUDOLPH ACKERMANN.  
*THE REPOSITORY OF ARTS, LITERATURE,  
 COMMERCE, MANUFACTURES, FASHIONS  
 AND POLITICS.*

London: Ackermann, January 1809–June 1812.  
 Volumes I–VIII of the First Series.

Illustrated fashion journals began to appear on a regular basis in the latter decades of the eighteenth century in response to a growing consumerism in which the pursuit of fashion played a key role. These periodicals offered middle- and upper-class readers images and descriptions of the latest styles as well as other topical news, society notes and literary and theatre reviews. *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics* (1809–28) was a highly successful and influential publication of the early nineteenth century, and its comprehensive title indicates the range of subject matter found in this journal. The *Repository* was the creation of Rudolph Ackermann (1764–1834). Born in Stuttgart, Ackermann studied engraving there and subsequently worked in Paris as a designer before emigrating to Britain during the French Revolution. He established a print shop and drawing school in London in 1795, and was a pioneer of the lithographic process in the 1820s.

The format and content of the *Repository* was based on earlier French and German models, particularly *Le Cabinet des Modes* (1785–93) and the *Journal für Fabrik, Manufaktur, Handlung und Mode* (1791–1808). Each monthly issue contains a plate illustrating an aspect of interior decoration and one or two fashion plates with stylishly attired female figures, often posed with a piece of furniture. The latter are accompanied by a detailed description and indication for occasion-specific wear. Additionally, all but two of the volumes comprising the First Series include small textile swatches: on a single page, three or four samples with “patterns of British manufacture” are set within an allegorical woodcut design. Information on an adjacent page identifies the type of textile, recommends particular uses for garments or interior furnishings and provides the name of the merchant or manufacturer.

While the textiles featured promote domestic production and consumption, the feminine fashions in the plates demonstrate a pronounced French influence, especially following the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815. Not only were images from the Parisian *Journal des Dames et des Modes* (1797–1839) copied in Ackermann’s, but many descriptions are notable for their references to French items such as kid gloves, cloaks and bows, and extensive use of French fashion terminology. Well informed by the Ackermann editor, a British woman might style her hair *à la Grecque*, adorn her forehead with a jeweled *bandeau* and dress herself in a tunic *à l’antique* or a *pelisse* with *ailles de papillon* sleeve details, in imitation of Parisian *belles*.







YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS OF BLOCK-PRINTED COTTON  
British, ca. 1780–90

In its fabric and construction, this young girl's dress speaks to the success of the British cotton industry as well as changing attitudes towards child development in the second half of the eighteenth century. Produced in increasing quantities and available at a wide range of prices that reflected quality of fabric and complexity of printing, patterned and plain cottons began to replace silks for daywear in the wardrobes of men, women and children across the socio-economic spectrum. Small-scale, repeating floral designs, known as calicoes, were used extensively for women's and girls' dresses. Although white-ground calicoes were more popular overall, dark colored grounds were particularly fashionable in the 1780s and 1790s. Barbara Johnson (1738–1825), a British woman of the rural gentry, kept a scrapbook of her dress fabrics; included among these is a black-ground calico with a small, trailing floral pattern (Victoria and Albert Museum, T.219-1973), purchased in 1787, which is very similar to this example.

By the late eighteenth century, children were no longer viewed as miniature adults or restricted by the more formal styles of their parents' clothing. A new emphasis was placed on comfort and freedom of movement that were deemed essential for children's physical and mental health. This simply styled dress with a high-waisted bodice is gently fitted with small tucks front and back that allowed for growth. The eminently practical fabric choice of a colorful, washable cotton was a sensible concession to the needs of an active young girl.



### CHINTZ APPLIQUÉ BORDER British, 1842

Patchwork appliqué, a technique often born of necessity and frugality, has long been a practical medium for personal artistic expression within the domestic realm. Less time consuming than embroidery, patchwork was also economical in the use of fabric scraps left over from making clothing, or salvaged cuttings from worn out garments and household furnishings. Originally part of a larger coverlet dated 1842, this engaging appliqué border serves not only as a document of creative amateur needlework, but also of experimentation within British chintz production.

Most conventional patchwork textiles are arranged with hexagonal, square or other repeating geometric shapes that connect like puzzle pieces; pictorial patchworks are less common, and were usually made with figural motifs cut from patterned fabrics. Displaying a noteworthy level of individuality, the maker of this appliqué border was not constrained by the exacting process of aligning the interlocking fabric components, nor by preexisting figural imagery. Instead, this fanciful panel is decorated with an array of imaginative forms of original inspiration, placed at the embroiderer's whim: diminutive card suits, half-moons and other quirky motifs are interspersed among spoked wheels, windmills, animals, gingerbread-like figures, and outsize maple leaves. Lively sawtooth borders finish the composition.

The charm of this patchwork is not only in the shapes of the appliqués, but also in the variety of fabrics used. Novelty and eclecticism were hallmarks of the British chintz industry in the nineteenth century; industrial innovations, especially significant advances made in roller-printing techniques, allowed for increasing consumer demands to be met as rapidly as possible. Prior to the invention of synthetic colorants, dye technology was steadily improving and a whole new spectrum of colors—from chrome yellow to lapis blue—was used to make textiles like those represented on this border. Calicoes and madder-dyed prints, staples of women's everyday wear in the nineteenth century, were sensible choices because of their ability to camouflage stains and appear here with frequency; other types, such as marbled, *ombré* striped, glazed floral, and paisley shawl-inspired fabrics, were also transformed into appliqués for this embroidery.

A mid-nineteenth-century coverlet with similar applied patchwork motifs is found in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection (T.86-1957).

19" H x 114" W





PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON PANEL  
Indian (Coromandel Coast) for the Sri Lankan Market, ca. 1730–50

A predominance of vivid reds is the most identifiable characteristic of Indian trade textiles made specifically for Dutch commerce, both for export to Europe and in Indonesia. This striking example of painted-and-dyed cotton, collected in Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon), shows the distinctive palette favored by Dutch colonists and native Sri Lankans.

To achieve the breadth of red tones found in Indian painted cottons, several natural dyes were used. One of the principal red dyestuffs was madder; another was sappanwood, a timber imported from Southeast Asia. Both yield various ruddy shades. *Chay*, however, was the preferred source for radiant claret hues. Extracted from the roots of the *Oldenlandia umbellata* plant, *chay* was considered far superior to other red coloring agents, and the finest specimens were grown in the Krishna River delta in northern Sri Lanka. The rich colors produced with *chay* and its mordant, alum, were praised in a letter written by the Dutch East India Company's Commissioner-General, Hendrick Adriaan van Rheede, in 1688: "The red color is made of four, and possibly more, roots and barks, the most beautiful of which is *chay*.... It is remarkable to see how they put a piece of white cloth in the dye vat, which, when they take it out, shows nice red flowers and leaves or tendrils, while the rest remains white."

Though van Rheede mentioned red motifs against a white ground, a variation—colorful decoration rendered against an expanse of red—is more typical of cottons for Indonesian markets. This panel, originally part of a sarong, has a discernibly Western aesthetic. Realizing the skills of Indian textile painters, Western merchants sent luxurious brocaded silks to India to be copied in chintz form. The translations, though rarely exact, chronicle the fertile atmosphere of design exchange in early eighteenth-century commerce and also attest to the success of European inflected patterns in Indonesia. Two distinct types of silks are referenced within this piece: the serrated fronds and fanned palmettes relate to lace pattern brocades of the 1720s, and the heraldic double-headed eagle motif appears to be copied from seventeenth-century silks made in the Portuguese colony of Macao for export to Europe.

43" H x 50" W

BROCADED LACE PATTERN SILK  
French, ca. 1725–30

With their luxuriant patterns and pleasing symmetry, so-called lace pattern silks of the early eighteenth century were used for sumptuous fashions and furnishings throughout Europe. Peaking in popularity in the 1720s, lace pattern brocades underscore a significant design exchange between two important French industries. Silks of this type are characterized by areas of delicate diaper patterning and fillings that typically resemble lace or net. It may appear that silk weavers derived their designs from pieces of lace; however, it was in fact the brocades that inspired the lacemakers of the day. Though independently creative, lace manufacturers kept abreast of stylistic developments in related fields—within the detailed, mesh-like silk patterns of this brief period, designers saw great potential for new types of intricacies in their laces.

For the stylish and wealthy, lace pattern silks were transformed into extravagant garments. In 1729, Mrs. Delany, an avid observer of British and Continental fashions, wrote to a friend about her latest indulgence—a dress she had commissioned, made from French silk with a ground of "...dark grass green, brocaded in a running pattern like lace of white intermixt with festoons of flowers in faint colours." The cost per yard of her silk was £17; comparatively, a yard of plain taffeta in this period cost about eight shillings. Since a court dress could require as many as sixteen yards of material, a significant investment is represented in the choice of such an expensive brocade. So similar in description to Mrs. Delany's silk, this example—with gently scrolling bands, lush foliage and elegant palette—was made all the more luminous with the profuse addition of silver brocading. Generous use of metallic-wrapped threads demonstrates an artful command of texture: both *frisé* (twisted for a crinkled effect) and *filé* (smooth in appearance) are employed here with great decorative flourish. The purity of silver is evident in the lack of any significant tarnish. As splendid as when first woven, this lace pattern silk demonstrates the exceptional results achieved by French weavers of the eighteenth century.

48" H x 20.75" W



OVERSKIRT PANEL OF *VELOURS AU SABRE* TRIMMED WITH  
CHENILLE BALL FRINGE AND PASSEMENTERIE  
French, ca. 1880–85

Striking combinations of color and texture, lush patterns and a surfeit of trimming distinguished the asymmetric, layered and bustled female silhouette of the early- to mid-1880s. Greatly esteemed in the world of high fashion, Lyonnais designers and weavers of the late nineteenth century produced luxury dress textiles and passementerie aimed at an elite international clientele.

The technique, pattern and palette of this overskirt panel convey the opulence of the early Belle Epoque aesthetic. *Velours au sabre* is a complex weave structure that was a specialty of the Lyon silk industry. Not a true velvet, it is, rather, a satin in which the pattern is warp printed prior to weaving, and the pile effect is achieved by hand-cutting the warp floats in the areas required by the design. Fashion journals of the period illustrate and describe in vivid detail the vogue for large-scale floral patterns, for a variety of velvet weaves and for rich, glowing colors like those in this example—carnation, cardinal, and ruby reds, yellows, and bronze.

*La Mode Illustrée* of 1883 and 1884 cites the then current popularity of velvet ensembles trimmed with deep chenille ball fringe for the fall and winter seasons. The *New York Fashion Bazar*, which kept its readers abreast of the most up-to-date Parisian styles, declared in July 1883 that, “Chenille fringes of two kinds, the rat-tail and the fluffy, are both very fashionable.” In motion, the quivering rows of ball fringe would have added a jaunty touch. Extensive yardage of both fabric and trimming would have been required for the full *toilette*, a visual index of conspicuous consumption.

An identical panel of this velvet is in the collection of the Museum at F.I.T. (P91.22.1).





IMPERIAL RUSSIAN COURT DRESS OF  
EMBROIDERED VELVET  
BY CHARLES FREDERICK WORTH  
French, ca. 1888

The renowned British-born couturier, Charles Frederick Worth (1825–1895) virtually dictated women’s fashion from his establishment founded in 1857 on the Rue de la Paix, one of the most elegant shopping districts in Paris. Dubbed “le tyran de la mode” by his patron, the trendsetting French Empress Eugénie, Worth dressed women of the highest echelons of Parisian and international society as well as leading courtesans and actresses. His formal evening and court wear were noted for their spectacular use of luxurious, often specially commissioned Lyonnais silks and richly applied decoration in the form of embroidery, fabric trim, lace, and passementerie.

In the early eighteenth century, Peter the Great obliged the Russian nobility to adopt Western-style dress, and by the late nineteenth century the court was decidedly Francophile in its fashions. The penchant for extravagance associated with the imperial rulers and their circle was well supplied by showy creations from the house of Worth. In 1871, the couturier himself designated his Russian clients as the top spenders. This impressive court costume, comprising boned bodice, skirt and train, was worn by Marie Maximilianova Romanovska, Duchess of Leuchtenberg (1841–1914), a great-granddaughter of Empress Joséphine and a regular Worth customer between 1881 and 1888. The ivory silk petersham label has the woven-in signature of Charles Worth that was introduced in the late 1880s and remained in use until the closing of the house in the twentieth century.

Of luminous emerald green silk velvet, the bodice and twelve-foot train are densely embroidered with stylized floral and foliate motifs in opalescent crystal and silver metallic beads, embossed silver strip and plain and twisted purl. A border of deep, matching green silk plush adds sumptuous tactile splendor to the dramatic train. Intended to be seen by candlelight, the gown’s embroidery materials and the cloth-of-silver moiré skirt would have sparkled brilliantly. The duchess’s appearance at court in Worth’s magnificent ensemble would have ostentatiously conveyed her status—and the artistry of its creator.







LAMBA AKOTIFAHANA  
Madagascar, ca. 1900

*Lamba akotifahana*, the Malagasy term for this rich type of silk textile ornamented with its distinctive supplementary weft patterning, embody the prestige of cloth in Malagasy society. In the course of their history, *lamba* have been used to clothe the living and to wrap the dead. The use of bright colors and the combination of vertical striped bands with geometric design elements reflect the status of the cloth's owner, referring possibly to one's political rank and position in society. Working from a repertoire of designs, weavers of *lamba* carefully selected both colors and patterns. Motifs represent traditional forms as well as those borrowed in the nineteenth century from European sources. The stylized leaves seen here appear frequently in known examples. In 1886, Queen Ranaivalona III of Madagascar presented United States President Grover Cleveland with diplomatic gifts including *lamba akotifahana*. The overall design of this example relates to one of the cloths given to President Cleveland and now in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution (E165.580). Only a few examples of historic *lamba* exist in European and American museums and, in 1995, a fire at the National Museum of the Queen's Palace in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, destroyed the country's most important collection of these extremely rare cloths.

88" H x 52" W



### STRIP-WOVEN CLOTH

Mende people, Sierra Leone, early 20th century

Sierra Leone cloths of prodigious lengths, known as *kpokpo*, would hang at important occasions such as state ceremonies and funerals as striking displays of wealth and social position. These large strip-woven cotton cloths required specialized production—they were typically commissioned for an event and weavers were sometimes retained by chiefs. This *kpokpo* is composed of strips over thirteen feet long, and lengths of up to thirty feet have been recorded. In 1924, the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley featured a Sierra Leone Pavilion where Western audiences had the opportunity to view examples of traditional cloths as well as demonstrations of Sierra Leone weavers at work.

It has been noted that, “A good *kpokpo* cloth will be judged, of course, not only by the accuracy with which its various design elements fit together but also by the number of motifs employed and the imagination shown in their distribution over the cloth.” Juxtaposing bold design with subtle variations in patterns and colors, this unusually fine example speaks of the weaver’s virtuosity and the longstanding traditions of Sierra Leone weaving.

Illustrated in *African Textiles*, John Gillow (2003), cover and p. 28.

13’ 2” H x 63” W



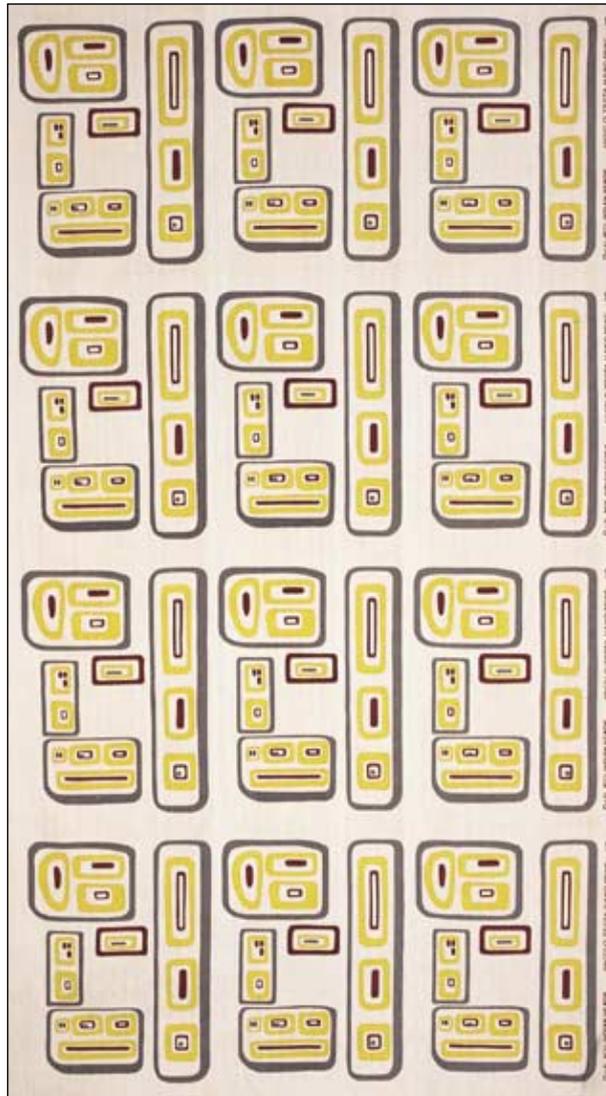


*SPORTSMEN'S BLUES AND INDIAN HEADS*  
SCREEN-PRINTED COTTONS BY ANGELO TESTA  
American, 1942

Now recognized as an important figure in the American Bauhaus movement, Angelo Testa (1921–1984) originally intended to pursue a career in archaeology at the University of Chicago. But shortly after beginning his studies, Testa enrolled in the newly formed School of Design where he received instruction from Hungarian painter and collagist László Moholy-Nagy. The philosophical and aesthetic kinship forged between teacher and student proved valuable to the young artist, and Testa—through paintings, prints and sculptures—became a leading American proponent of non-objective art. Though his talents in these media were considerable, the versatility of Testa’s professional training is most evident in the textiles he designed and self-produced.

At the Institute of Design (as the school had been renamed by the time Testa graduated in 1945), he also worked under the tutelage of Marli Ehrman, head of the weaving department and a former Bauhaus student. Though Testa learned the craft of weaving from her, and would continue to experiment with weave structures throughout his lifetime, his silk-screened textile designs have had the most impact. In 1947, he established his own business, Angelo Testa & Company, in Chicago. Using both commercially produced and hand-loomed yardage as his canvases, Testa merged artisanal craftsmanship with industrial aspirations. His most important clients—F. Schumacher & Co., Greff Fabrics, Knoll Associates, and Herman Miller Furniture Co.—introduced Testa’s designs to the American marketplace and ensured their use in a range of modern interiors.

*(continued)*



These two outstanding designs were both created in 1942, while Testa was still a student, but they were not printed until his first year in business. *Sportsmen's Blues* is one of Testa's most iconic works. It achieves clarity and boldness through its banded composition: alternating red pinstriped and solid black fields create contrasting textures, providing a lively backdrop for the various curved and straight linear shapes that flow along the surface. Though the title may imply representational imagery—sports-related equipment, such as horseshoes, hockey sticks and fishhooks—the motifs can be viewed as purely abstract. Cryptic symbols were part of Testa's anti-historical design repertoire, though *Indian Heads* clearly demonstrates specific cultural references to Native American arts. Organized into distinct units, the clusters of five oblong cartouches can be interpreted as tribal masks or other totemic objects. With its emphasis on strong vertical and lateral repetition, Testa's sensitivity to spatial relationships is evident in the layout of *Indian Heads*. This colorway, of maize yellow, rust and mineral gray against a neutral ground, also attests to his preference for natural hues. The mysterious, artifact-like quality of Testa's motifs in these designs may have roots in his early archaeological studies.

*Sportsmen's Blues* is found in several distinguished American museum collections: the Art Institute of Chicago (1982.179), the Allentown Art Museum (2001.008.001) and the Museum at F.I.T. (2003.89.2). *Indian Heads* is represented in the Art Institute of Chicago collection (1982.166), and is documented as having been used for curtains aboard the S.S. Argentina passenger ship in 1948.

*Sportsmen's Blues*: 108" H x 46" W  
*Indian Heads*: 126" H x 46" W

*LES ALTHÉAS*  
BLOCK-PRINTED SILK SATIN BY RAOUL DUFY  
French, ca. 1918

Bridging the distinct worlds of fine arts and fashion, painter Raoul Dufy (1877–1953) was a pioneer in bringing his highly decorative yet artistic textiles to the most avant-garde French couturiers of the Art Deco era. Dufy's successful early collaborations with Paul Poiret led to an exclusive relationship with Bianchini-Férier, one of Lyon's premier textile firms. During his tenure there from 1912 through 1928, Dufy created a range of textiles for both furnishing and dress. He worked prolifically, leaving an archive of approximately four thousand designs; in three years alone he created over three hundred patterns that were made into fabrics, and many more preparatory sketches that were never produced. While some of Dufy's designs were translated into jacquard weaves, most were block-printed—with his penchant for oversize arabesques and large repeats, Dufy felt limited by the spatial constraints of other printing techniques. Wood-block-printed textiles were in keeping with Dufy's illustration artwork and also with the trend for bold, handcrafted fabrics in Art Deco fashions.

Whether woven or printed, Dufy was able to convey his *joie de vivre* through floral patterns, and *Les Althéas* demonstrates this with flair. For the painter flowers were, in his own words, "...the natural vehicles of colour...the first motifs." The freshness of blooming hibiscus is captured on the shimmering surface of this block-printed satin; a densely nestled arrangement of six flowers interlocks repeatedly in all directions, forming a mosaic of brilliant pinks and blues. Although the repeat was deliberately orchestrated, the overall composition maintains an air of spontaneity. Through variations in color saturation, the careful balance of shapes and soft, calligraphic outlines, Dufy expressed his vision of abstraction in nature—a vision that was simultaneously fashionable and artistic. Perhaps Gertrude Stein best defined Dufy's creative essence, both in the fine and applied arts: "Dufy is pleasure. Think of the color and it is not that and the line and it is not that, but it is that which is all together and which is the color that is in Dufy...."

This example is an original document from the Bianchini-Férier archives. *Les Althéas* was exhibited at the *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris* in 1977 (catalogue no. 1240), and also at a special exhibition of Dufy's textiles in Honfleur, illustrated in the show's catalogue *Raoul Dufy: La Passion des Tissus* (1993), p. 97.

43" H x 38.5" W (detail shown)





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PRINTED BY

Pressroom Printer & Designer, Hong Kong

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