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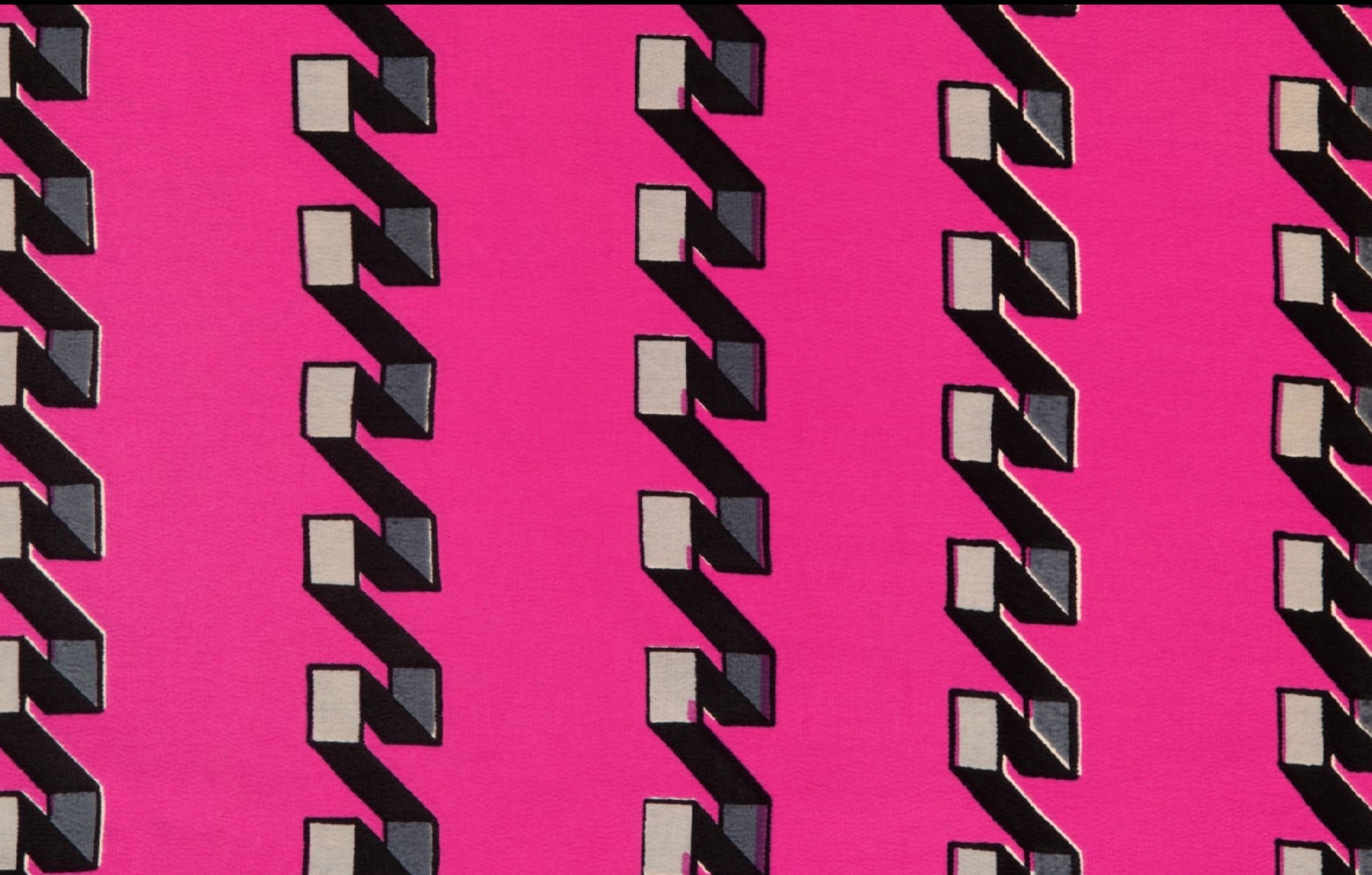

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A Catalogue
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OISEAU-SOLEIL WOOL TAPESTRY

Jean Picart le Doux
French, ca. 1971
64 x 54 3/4 in.

Jean Picart le Doux (1902–1982) was one of the leading figures in the revival of French tapestry that occurred in the decades following World War II. Born in Paris, he studied bookbinding, typography, and drawing, and briefly worked in publishing before turning to graphic art in 1931. Successful throughout the 1930s as a poster designer, Picart le Doux ventured into the medium of tapestry in 1939 at the encouragement of Jean Lurçat (1892–1966), the earliest and chief proponent of the revival. Picart le Doux's artistic training and professional background provided him with a sophisticated awareness of the importance of line and color in the creation of large-scale, two-dimensional hangings, and, in 1943, he received his first major commission to produce three tapestry cartoons for the ocean liner *La Marseillaise*. He was a founding member—and later president—of the *Association des Peintres-Cartonniers de Tapisseries*, established in 1945, that sponsored group exhibitions in France and abroad, furthering the postwar renown and dominance of French tapestry production. Over the next two decades, until his death in 1982, he was prolific: Picart le Doux produced nearly three hundred tapestries (many of them special commissions); his work was shown in over thirty one-man and over four hundred group exhibitions in galleries and museums throughout Europe and South America, and acquired by institutions worldwide; and his hangings decorated the walls of French embassies in Europe and the Far East. Between 1961 and 1962, he served as a professor at the École Normale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

Spearheaded by Lurçat, the French government-supported renaissance, or rebirth, sought to align postwar tapestry production with the medieval period, which was viewed as the golden age of these woven hangings, centered in France. The *Exposition de la Tapisserie Ancienne et Moderne* held at the Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne in Paris, in 1946, explicitly promoted this connection, and works by Lurçat, Picart le Doux, and other designers were presented alongside masterpieces of the Middle Ages. Lurçat and his circle deliberately sought to emulate the appearance of these earlier tapestries in their own compositions; they eschewed the illusionistic effects of the highly modeled tapestries of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries that imitated painting with the use of fine wool and silk wefts dyed in myriad subtle shades. Instead, postwar designers' tapestries drew on medieval antecedents with flat backgrounds, solid areas of color, and a limited palette, executed in heavy, coarsely woven wool. Showcasing bold, conventionalized forms and contrasting hues, these tapestries celebrate nature, the seasons, the arts, and allegories of the elements, further evoking the medium's pictorial heritage. A respect for truth to materials and an insistence on tapestry's original function as decorative wall hangings signified a modernist approach on the part of French postwar designers and emphasized their crucial role in the revival of a centuries-old weaving tradition.

Standing erect on a small island with its expansive flame-like wings outstretched, almost filling the entire field, Picart le Doux's commanding *Oiseau-Soleil* is emblematic of his personal design aesthetic and artistic philosophy, as well the characteristics of modern French tapestry. Rendered in shades of pea green, chartreuse, yellow, brown, and black against a brick red and cinnamon-colored ground, this fantastical bird, with its flamboyantly crested, delicate head and attenuated body perched on slender legs with spiky feet, literally radiates the sun's fire and energy. The smooth contours of the bird's ovoid-shaped body juxtapose its intersecting, sawtoothed plumage;


JEAN PICART LE DOUX

the verticality of this central form is balanced by the horizontal sweep of the undulating, tapered wings with their puzzle-piece color joins, accented by thick black outlines. Picart le Doux's signature *flammèches*, or small rays, are like individual feathers floating between and beyond the bird's wings. Introduced around 1947, they became one of his most frequently used motifs. In the artist's symbology, the sun represented light, warmth, and joy, and in surrounding his human figures, animals, trees, and other living forms other with these distinctive, curling elements, Picart le Doux conveyed their inner life force and endowed them with the sun's beneficence. *Oiseau-Soleil* communicates Picart le Doux's belief that, "in whatever form he expresses himself, the artist is the bridge linking the world of sensation to that of perfection. His role is to extract the marvellous from the everyday."

Woven on a low-warp loom, *Oiseau-Soleil* was manufactured by Atelier Hamot, whose initials appear in the lower left corner opposite Picart le Doux's name in the lower right. Located in Aubusson and well known for its high-end tapestry production since the mid-nineteenth century, Hamot produced several other tapestries by the same designer. The earthy and acid colors probably derived from natural dyes that were reintroduced in the years following the war to underscore further the association between medieval and modern production. The original paper label stitched to the reverse is stamped "Tapisserie d'Aubusson / H 160 x L140 Carton Original de / Jean Picart le Doux / Édité par Hamot." Picart le Doux's signature is enclosed in a rectangle and the artist likely added the tapestry's title, written in the same brown ink at the top.

One of Picart le Doux's tapestries, *Soleil de Lune* (Inv. 1995.5.4), is currently on view in the exhibition, *Collections! Collections!* at the Musée Jean-Lurcat et de la Tapisserie Contemporaine in Angers (February 23, 2019–April 26, 2020).

MM

FIVE KNITTED SWEATERS

Designed and made by Denise Boulet Poiret
French, ca. 1928

"Her legacy testifies to the poetics of the object, with its power to tell many stories, ranging from the prosaic to the magical."

–Caroline Evans, *Poiret*, 2007

On October 3, 1905, nineteen-year-old Denise Boulet, daughter of a textile manufacturer from Normandy, wed twenty-five-year-old Paul Poiret, son of a Parisian cloth merchant, launching one of the most momentous artistic partnerships of the twentieth century. The couturier on the rise found in Mlle Boulet not only a life partner, but the ultimate muse, "the expression of all my convictions," as he explained to *Vogue* in 1913. Tall, thin, young, and dark haired, she had supposedly never worn a corset, lending her body a lax curve foreign to fashion at the time. On her lithe figure, which remained constant despite the birth of five children, he draped simple T-shaped gowns with high, square necklines that were gathered below the bust and fell straight to the floor, where heelless slippers or wrinkled boots gave the silhouette a sturdy footing. In the words of Diana Vreeland—who organized the 1974 exhibition *Inventive Paris Clothes 1909–1939* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute that featured Poiret's garments—"he gave the world the narrow, slender woman." Ignoring the contributions of his wife, Vreeland added, "the woman of today is his creation."

By the mid-1920s, however, the mode had changed. Poiret's initial reluctance to conform to the prevailing flapper aesthetic threatened his business, and with it, his marriage. Signs of trouble began following a tour of the United States in the fall of 1927 where he attempted to drum up several design jobs. In early 1928, to public astonishment, he shaved his trademark beard. In March, he announced that he would be relocating to New York. The following month, he filed for divorce, alleging that his wife displayed "bursts of temperament." She countersued, citing her husband's cruelty. In late April, the Seine Tribunal granted both parties' petitions to dissolve the marriage. With resignation, Poiret told the press, "I am no longer necessary," adding, "I shall leave the Paris which is no longer the Paris I have known." Bankruptcies and several unsuccessful attempts to revive Poiret's couture career followed, leading to his ignominious death at age sixty-five, in 1944, forgotten in the midst of war.

Despite their ostensibly acrimonious divorce, Denise Poiret painstakingly safeguarded her personal Poiret wardrobe for the next four decades. Most of the Poiret garments extant in museum collections were worn by his wife, who never ceased believing in the clothing's artistic merit, a product of their mutual collaboration. This wardrobe was a key element in Poiret's reappraisal, forming the bulk of exhibitions at the Musée Jacquemart-André (1974), the Fashion Institute of Technology (1976), and, following a large auction, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2007).

This collection of five hand-knit sweaters represents Denise Poiret as subject, rather than object, creator rather than canvas, an expression of the self-reliance that the clothing created by her ex-husband might obscure. In the wake of the Poirets' separation, she found herself caring for her three surviving children—her eldest, Rosine, died in 1915 and her youngest, Gaspard, died of influenza in 1918—and in need of money. Drawing from years of design experience working alongside her husband, she devised and created these garments as prototypes in the hopes

that they would provide a means of supporting her family. Recalling a man's waistcoat, the three full-sized vests close with self-covered or horn buttons in a pseudo-double-breasted manner. Each is entirely handcrafted, with darts for shaping over the bust, and a high, cropped waist, a silhouette to which Denise Poiret remained loyal. All were executed in wool except for the beige example, which is knitted of linen and suitable for summer. The dark green vest bears a ribbon of a *Chevalier* of the *Ordre des Arts et Lettres*. The orange vest with black Bakelite buttons is a miniature version, probably worn by one of her surviving daughters, Perrine or Martine. A child's bell-sleeved navy blue knitted sweater is designed like an Indian man's *jama*, wrapping left over right to close with snaps at the chest; it is a reminder that Denise Poiret shared her husband's orientalist taste. Like the orange vest, it features applied knitted rouleaux around the neck (and arms in the case of the orange) for softness. Simple, blue-and-white flowers embroidered in wool across the sweater recall the naive designs of the Atelier Martine, Poiret's decorating business established in 1911.

By choosing knitting to earn a living, Denise Poiret resorted to a handicraft that had sustained independent women for centuries. A potent symbol of both motherly domesticity and female industry, it also has a rich history as a tool of political subversion and female protest, ranging from knitting bees organized by patriotic women during the American Revolution, to the pink hats worn at the 2017 Women's March in Washington, D.C. Throughout both World Wars I and II, knitting was a common form of philanthropic fundraising for "women at home," in the allied countries, gaining a more rebellious connotation in the 1960s and 1970s, when knitting became a hotly contested emblem of both progressive and conservative reactions to feminism. Female craftivists have continued to express political beliefs in knit and purl, undermining stereotypes of femininity by embedding political activism in a skill otherwise dismissed as purely domestic.

Little is known of Denise Poiret's life between her divorce in 1928 and the resurgence of her ex-husband's name in the 1970s. In 1930, she acted as the "Paris style manager" for a new firm called Associated French Artists, Inc., based on 42nd Street in New York, for which she agreed to send weekly shipments of textiles hand selected from among top French firms. Her involvement lasted only a few months, and the venture itself survived only until 1931.

Unlike her husband's voluminous written output, almost none of Denise Poiret's own words have survived. As fashion theorist Caroline Evans has noted, her wardrobe itself acts as "inventory, index, and autobiography." These sweaters, the product of her own hands, designed both for her children and as a commercial venture, are a testament to a complex mixture of resilience, maternal devotion, and artistry that is well beyond mere muse.

For a child's dress similar to the blue embroidered example here, see Françoise Auguet, "La Création en Liberté: Univers de Paul et Denise Poiret, 1905–1928," Piasa auction house (May 10, 11, 2005), lot 457, p. 178.

WDG

SILVER METALLIC CROCHET EVENING GOWN

Kostio de War
French (Paris), ca. 1938

Evocative of medieval chain mail as much as Hollywood glamour, the openwork evening gowns of Kostio de War are among the most distinctive garments of the 1930s. Hand crocheted from a proprietary yarn comprising a cotton-thread core surrounded by a strip of pure metal, their resistance to tarnishing augments the sense of immutability embodied by the simple silhouette, which is both entirely prewar and resolutely timeless.

The life of the woman known professionally as Kostio de War is almost as complex and scintillating as one of her distinctive handmade garments. She lived several lives, ranging from dance-hall entertainer to fashionable socialite, and from couturière to baroness. Lyska Kostia de Warkoffska was born on April 20, 1896, in the oil-rich boom town of Baku, now the capital of Azerbaijan but then part of Russia. While many of the Russian émigrés who settled in Paris between the wars initially fled in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, de Warkoffska arrived earlier, around 1913, for a career on stage. At age seventeen, she was introduced by the notorious demimondaine Louise Balthy in *La sans-Gene* at the Théâtre Michel, where the seductive dancing of mademoiselle Lyska, as she was then known, made a sensation. The journal *Gil Blas* called her "a very pretty Russian, quite launched in the Parisian society, who tackles the stage for the first time, and cuts a seductive figure." Immediately, she became a fashion star, originating that same year what one critic called "that fashion for walking with one's stomach thrust out and an umbrella under the arm" at Deauville. Despite a promising stage career, an innate sense of the theatrical soon made her more notorious for her eccentricities and daring than her professional talent. She took to wearing male attire for her daily promenades in the Bois de Boulogne, initially accompanied by her Pekinese and Pomeranian dogs, but soon replaced by her collection of dolls from around the world, to which she spoke as if they were alive.

The "petite baronne Lyska Kostio," as the press then dubbed her, was also known as the "queen of the tango," supposedly tearing down the walls of her apartment on the avenue du Bois de Boulogne to create an immense dance hall. During World War I, she turned this space into a hospital for convalescing soldiers, working as a nurse for the Red Cross. In the 1920s, she transformed into the fashionable socialite Mme. Kostio, with the press following her every move at races and resorts from Nice to Biarritz to Cannes, often dressed by Paul Poiret. By 1927, she had become a famous eccentric in the vein of the Marchesa Casati, throwing lavish costume parties at her rented palazzo in Venice. For her raucous "Return to China and Afghanistan" party that year, she enlisted local seamen to dress as "oriental" servants and filled an immense garden with borzois, monkeys, and cockatoos. Posed on a pedestal, nearly nude and flanked by sword-bearing attendants, "la belle Caucasienne" greeted guests arriving on torch-lit gondolas wearing a "costume made of glass," which, in the words of *Paris-Soir*, gave her the appearance of "an enormous transparent chrysalis inflamed."

She disappeared from view in the late 1920s, only to emerge in 1934 as the designer of fashionable sportswear known as Kostio de War, sometimes mistakenly referred to as Kostia or Kostio de Var. Never a member of the *grande couture*, her house was instead one of several houses with a female *griffe*, like Anny Blatt, Amy Linker, Aileen Rice, and Vera Borea, which found success with creative ensembles for sport and leisure. Her clients included actresses and intellectuals, such as writers Marcelle Maurette and Simone André-Maurois, as well as Edith Piaf, the Duchess of Windsor,

Greta Garbo, Rita Hayworth, and Marlene Dietrich. Following the movements of fashionable clientele, the house itself was quite peripatetic, changing to addresses on the rue Pomereu, rue Jean Goujon, rue Lauriston, rue Clément Marol, Avenue Marceau, and, by the 1950s, the Avenue George V. Her inventive take on sportswear found great favor in the United States, where her designs were carried by Hattie Carnegie and Jay Thorpe; in 1936, she created exclusive designs for Bonwit Teller, Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, and George Fox & Co.

Knitted and crocheted gown by Kostio de War, "Inspired by Knights," *The Decatur Herald*, April 5, 1939

Capitalizing on a broader enthusiasm for hand knitting that emerged in the mid-1930s, she became famous for her unique hand-knit and crocheted evening gowns. Initially, she explored the idea in chenille thread, pairing sheaths in "loose, large mesh patterns" over slips of "lacquered satin," as *Women's Wear Daily* described in 1935. A sometimes enthusiast for surreal touches, she competed briefly with Elsa Schiaparelli for headlines, particularly when the latter also introduced several hand-knitted pieces in her winter 1935 collection. The U.S. press, however, found several distinct virtues in the elegantly practical garments made by Kostio de War: the dresses could be easily rolled up for travel and resisted wrinkling, while her heavier knitted metallic evening jackets could quickly dress up a simple dinner dress. In 1937, Paris-Soir reported on the popularity and practicality of knitted garments for sport as well as for evening wear, writing, "The more we lead busy lives, the more precious handmade goods become." They announced that Mme. Kostio de War had recently unearthed in central Europe an amusing book from about 1830 containing instructions for a variety of unusual historical stitches, which she had used in crafting her latest collection: "For evening, she has created with threads of copper, steel, [and] platinum, gowns of the most rare sumptuousness." In 1938, Denise Veber of the French paper *Marianne* called these "miracle" evening gowns of gold or silver very simple, but nevertheless of an almost magical (féerique) appearance.

Because she made similar garments from about 1935 until 1939, Kostio de War's metallic evening gowns are difficult to date precisely. However, this example, with its conspicuous shoulder pads, may date to early 1938, when a writer for the *Figaro* praised the designer's metallic openwork "siren" evening sheaths "woven from rays of moonlight … showcasing the line of a beautiful body, highlighting by means of a raised band the breadth of the shoulders." In this dress, the crenellated hem, shoulder pads, and collar are executed in a tighter knit, while the body itself is done in a complex scale-pattern crochet suggestive of a mermaid. Surprisingly, almost no contemporary

images of her metallic evening dresses are known, as the fashion press preferred to feature her novel day wear and unusual accessories.

In 1940, Kostio de War married Christian Charles Raymond Aymar de Rivals-Mazères (1907–1955), scion of an aristocratic family from Toulouse, and adopted the professional moniker of the Baroness de Rivals. She continued to design into the early 1950s, proving the agelessness of her designs by reissuing nearly identical examples of her 1930s creations after the war. Commercial operation ceased around 1952, although she continued to make garments for close friends well into the 1960s. She died on March 3, 1986, at her home in Paris just shy of her ninetieth birthday. Although relegated to some obscurity today, her work has inspired, directly or indirectly, several later designers, including Thierry Mugler and Azzedine Alaïa, who created gold openwork knit garments as part of his Spring 1992 collection.

Similar metallic crochet garments by Kostio de War are in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.230&A-1964; T.396-1976), the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (52807.A-D; UF 57-38-1), the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising Museum, Los Angeles (2015.5.66A-C), and, here attributed, the Rhode Island School of Design (59.031.1A-C).

WDG

PRINTED RAYON CREPE EVENING DRESS

Norman Norell, the textile designed in collaboration with Peter Todd Mitchell for Bianchini-Férier
American (New York), 1945

On March 21, 1945, as Western Allies prepared to invade Germany, the Costume Institute premiered its first exhibition as an official part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which it had joined as a quasi-independent branch only three months earlier. *American Fashions and Fabrics*, organized by Costume Institute founder Lee Simonson, featured the work of eighteen leading dress designers and nine textile houses, who collaborated to produce printed fabrics and garments inspired by works in the art museum's collection—proof of how far the United States had come in the five years since it had been effectively cut off from the influence of the French haute couture.

The main draw of the exhibition was a fashion review, in which models wearing garments by designers including Adrian, Claire McCardell, Tina Leser, and Pauline Trigère, made of fabrics from leading textile firms such as Onondaga, Wesley Simpson, and Bianchini-Férier, paraded through the museum. These presentations were repeated periodically throughout the exhibition's run, which lasted until the end of May 1945, and department stores across the United States subsequently staged their own versions to sell the "Museum Print" fabrics to home dressmakers.

Many of the designers had been inspired by ancient arts, ranging from Egyptian mummy wrappings to Greek vase painting. Others adapted motifs from Dutch tiles, Persian miniatures, Indian Buddha statues, and Franco-Flemish paintings. Ludwig Bemelmans, for one, took his cue from pre-Dynastic Egyptian pottery for a printed rayon (see *Cora Ginsburg Modern* catalogue 2019, p. 10, 11), while Onondaga staff artist Zoe Martin even adapted the engravings on a German Wheelock pistol of 1580, creating a printed crepe for DuPont, used by Clare Potter for an evening pajama.

This striking evening gown designed by Norman Norell (1900–1972) for Traina-Norell, featured in the exhibition, sprung from a similarly incongruous source: a monumental eighth-century BC funerary krater from the museum's collection (34.11.2). Created in partnership with young artist Peter Todd Mitchell for the U.S. branch of Bianchini-Férier, the silk-screened rayon crepe from which the gown is made lifted the geometric fret pattern from around the vessel's mouth for what *Women's Wear Daily* called an "architectural horizontal stripe," one of several prints that suggested a movement away from mawkish florals to more avant-garde patterns. It was manufactured by the Enka Company of North Carolina, which was at the same time producing rayon for Allied parachutes, having been requisitioned by President Roosevelt that February. Arresting in terms of its trompe-l'oeil dimensionality as well as its audacious color—described by *Women's Wear*, somewhat creatively, as "vivid American Beauty"—Norell used the fabric for both this slender evening gown and a short afternoon dress, both with soaring shoulder pads and slim skirts. "American designers, on their own, have come to use the museum more and more as a great fashion source," noted *Vogue* on June 1, 1945 in a feature on the exhibition that showcased a photograph of Norell's evening gown, adding, "when a museum offers them its unlimited cooperation, the news is good … and full of promise for the future of fashion as an art."

Along with Adrian, Norell was one of the founding fathers of the "American Look" in fashion that emerged triumphantly during World War II. Dubbed "America's Balenciaga," he was frequently lauded for the quality and ingenuity of his garments. *Vogue* editor Bettina Ballard, for one, believed Norell's clothes "had the same single-mindedness as Balenciaga's or Chanel's, and the same fanatical attention to quality," calling them "timeless." Born Norman David Levinson of Noblesville,

Indiana, Norell was a frail, artistic child, who developed what would become a lifelong obsession with the theater as a mode of escaping the reality of his frequent illnesses. Initially, he set his professional sights on the dramatic arena. He moved to New York at age nineteen to study art at Parsons School of Design and costume design at Pratt Institute, before finding work as a costume designer for Paramount Studios in Queens, and then the venerated Brooks Costume Company. By this time, he had adopted the elegant surname Norell, and commenced a gradual shift toward fashion rather than costume, although he worked out some of his more glitzy tendencies by designing intermittently for Broadway throughout his career. From 1924 to 1928, Norell worked for wholesaler Charles Amour. Then he began a thirteen-year tenure as the protégé of luxury retailer Hattie Carnegie, who he credited with teaching him all he knew about good taste and the American woman. At the beginning of this span, Norell was still dressing stars like Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford in dramatic, ruffled, polka-dotted creations indebted to Hollywood, but during his time with Carnegie, he progressively pared down his aesthetic, perfecting what would become his signature straightforward style.

Following a split with Carnegie in 1940, he was quickly snapped up by Seventh Avenue manufacturer Anthony Traina. In a deal that is now legendary, Traina offered Norell a larger salary if his name did not appear on the label, and less if it did. Norell chose the latter, and Traina-Norell was born. From 1941 until 1959, when Traina retired due to ill health, the label represented the most uncompromisingly luxurious, yet deceptively simple, form of the burgeoning American style. As *Life* told readers in 1944, Norell was "the pet designer of women who are so bored with clothes that only the most simple, classic lines can please them." An industry darling beloved for his kindness, he won the first Coty American Fashion Critics Award in 1943, receiving it again in 1951 and, was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1956. He was a founding member of the Council of Fashion Designers of America, and its first president, also acting as a mentor to generations of designers in Parson's Critics Design Program from 1950 until his death. In 1960, Norell's name had accrued enough renown to sustain an independent business, which continued successfully until his sudden death in 1972, the day before a retrospective showing of his designs was set to open at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Terracotta krater, Greek (Attic), late 1st quarter of the 8th century BCE, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 34.11.2

In fact, Norell's involvement with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Costume Institute goes back as far as the latter institution's founding in 1937, when it was known as the Museum of Costume Art. From the beginning, Norell supported the nascent institution's efforts to connect its collections with the dressmaking industry in New York, representing Hattie Carnegie in the 1938 *Exhibition of Authentic*

Costumes and the 1940 *Designer's Exhibition*, both of which featured contemporary American designer's interpretations of ethnographic or historical costumes in the museum's collection. He also frequently borrowed historical pieces from the museum for study in the early 1940s, ranging from a bullfighter's jacket to a Swiss peasant costume. During the war, the Museum of Costume Art staged several exhibitions meant to boost the New York dressmaking industry by offering new avenues of inspiration, and to offer both consumers and designers historical perspective on wartime privations. Norell's designs appeared in the 1942 exhibition *Fastenings and Embellishments*, for example, showcasing innovative closures that avoided the use of metal zippers. The present dress, created shortly after the former Museum of Costume Art announced its formal alliance with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but one year before it became an official department and took up residence, celebrates the Costume Institute's formative role in forging the marriage between fashion and art in the crucible of war.

Afternoon dress by Norman Norell of the same fabric, "Fashions Going Highbrow: Metropolitan Museum shows American Collection of Art-Inspired Fabrics and Gowns," *The Marshall News Messenger*, April 2, 1945

Like his idol, Cristóbal Balenciaga, Norell generally eschewed patterned fabrics, but when he did use them, he did so boldly. For this spectacular exhibition piece, Norell effectively created a Technicolor caryatid, wrapping the body in bands of serpentine Greek frets laid on a shocking pink ground. He worked out the pattern of the textile with Mitchell, who later became better known as a designer of scarves. The lissome silhouette is based on one Norell originally conceived in 1942, the year L-85 regulations were announced to limit the amount and fiber content of fabric for manufacturers in the United States. Eager to differentiate themselves from the dictates of Paris, American designers voluntarily embraced a narrow look, what *Vogue* called the "shoe-string silhouette," making it a symbol of their allegiance to practicality, athleticism, and frankness.

Comprised of only seven pattern pieces, the gown's simplicity of silhouette belies an ingenious draping that plays on the tension between the supple bias and the rigid straight grain, an idea echoed in the undulating, yet geometric, pattern. To lengthen the gown's lines, the textile is flipped on its side so that its stripes run vertically over the shoulders, terminating seamlessly at the hips in the perpendicular direction. In order to complete this 90-degree turn, the fabric was deftly gathered by hand into shirred side seams, shifting the cloth to the bias to allow for a soft drape over the chest, while

fitting tightly across the abdomen. The tubular skirt comprises a single panel of straight-set crepe slashed at the rear from hip to hem, where two godets spill into a rounded train. Large shoulder pads—called *Americains* by the French—and short, flanged sleeves, cut extremely low at the sides, emphasize the taut, tapered silhouette. Hieratic severity at the front gives way to elegant drapery at the back, the high-cut neck dipping to a low V (echoed in the sloping lines of the hip yoke) to emphasize a chiton-like blouson at the rear waist. In order to maintain this unbroken softness, Norell eliminated a center-back zipper, disguising a Talon "V" slide fastener—the same one used in uniforms for the U.S. Armed Forces, made without copper to conform to wartime restrictions—in the shirring. Pinked seams, hand finishing, and perfect pattern-matched seams across the shoulders are proof of Traina-Norell's reputation for couture-like quality.

Most of the original garments designed for the *American Fashions and Fabrics* exhibition were "fundamentally inspirational," according to *Women's Wear Daily*, and were not designed for production. However, this dress bears a label for the high-end department store Bonwit Teller, located at 56th Street off Fifth Avenue, which carried Traina-Norell from the label's inception. Consistently among the shop's most expensive brands, Traina-Norell evening gowns cost between $110 to $300 in the mid-1940s, when a good evening dress might retail for $70 to $90. At the time, the average American family earned between $1,500 and $2,500 per year.

Traina-Norell's printed dresses from the 1940s are exceptionally rare, particularly from the war years. Not only were they expensive and likely produced in small quantities, but the arrival of Christian Dior's New Look in 1947 made such garments immediately démodé, making the survival of this dress in its original state even more extraordinary. Samples of the fabric from which this dress is made are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection (45.135.1a, b). Only one other dress from the *American Fashions and Fabrics* exhibition entered the collection of the Costume Institute at the time, an Eva Rosencrans for Nettie Rosenstein design made of a printed silk designed by Brooke Cadwallader (C.I.45.108.2a–e). For further coverage of the fabric design, see *Art News Annual* (1945–46), p. 121, and *American Fabrics* 43 (Summer 1958), p. 94.

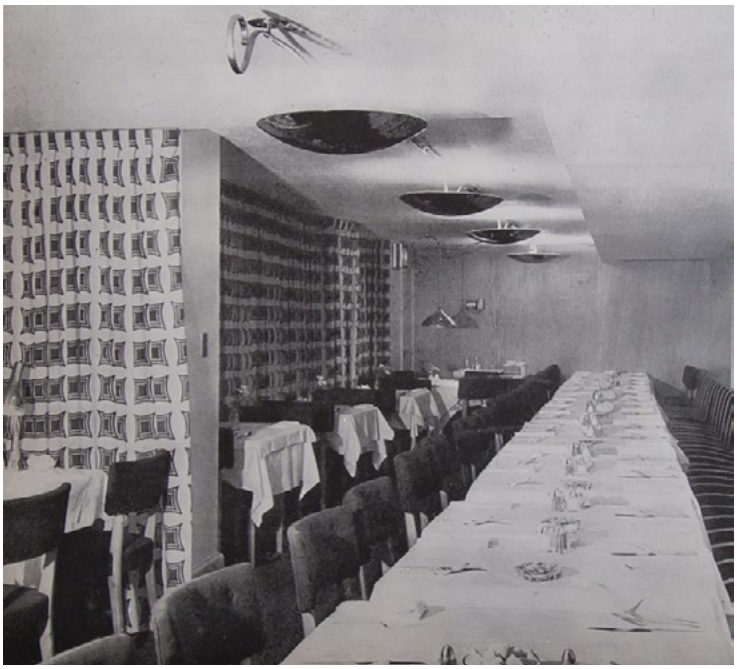
WDG

PURIST'S CHOICE and *CAPRICE* SCREEN-PRINTED FABRISC

Eva Lisa (Pipsan) Saarinen Swanson, manufactured by Goodall Fabrics
American (New York), 1947
Purist's Choice: 43 x 52 in.
Caprice: 57 1/2 x 52 in.

In 1947, the Finnish-American Trading Corporation Ltd. opened Finland House, the short-lived though historically significant gallery-cum-restaurant located at 39 East 50th Street in New York City, which showcased and sold the finest in Finnish postwar design. Finland House is remembered for the dramatic custom furnishings by its male cast of architects and designers: the calming, birch-veneered walls by Aarne Ervi, assistant of Alvar Aalto; the streamlined furniture, also in birch, by Ilmari Tapiovaara; and the perforated brass lighting of Paavo Tynell. The gallery's striking fabrics and their maker, however, have gone unnoticed. Outfitting the windows and walls of Finland House's dining room was the rhythmic patterning of concentric concave squares, a design by Pipsan Saarinen Swanson (1905–1979). Aptly titled *Purist's Choice*, the fabric, with its unadulterated geometry, ideally complemented the fresh forms of Finnish design that surrounded it.

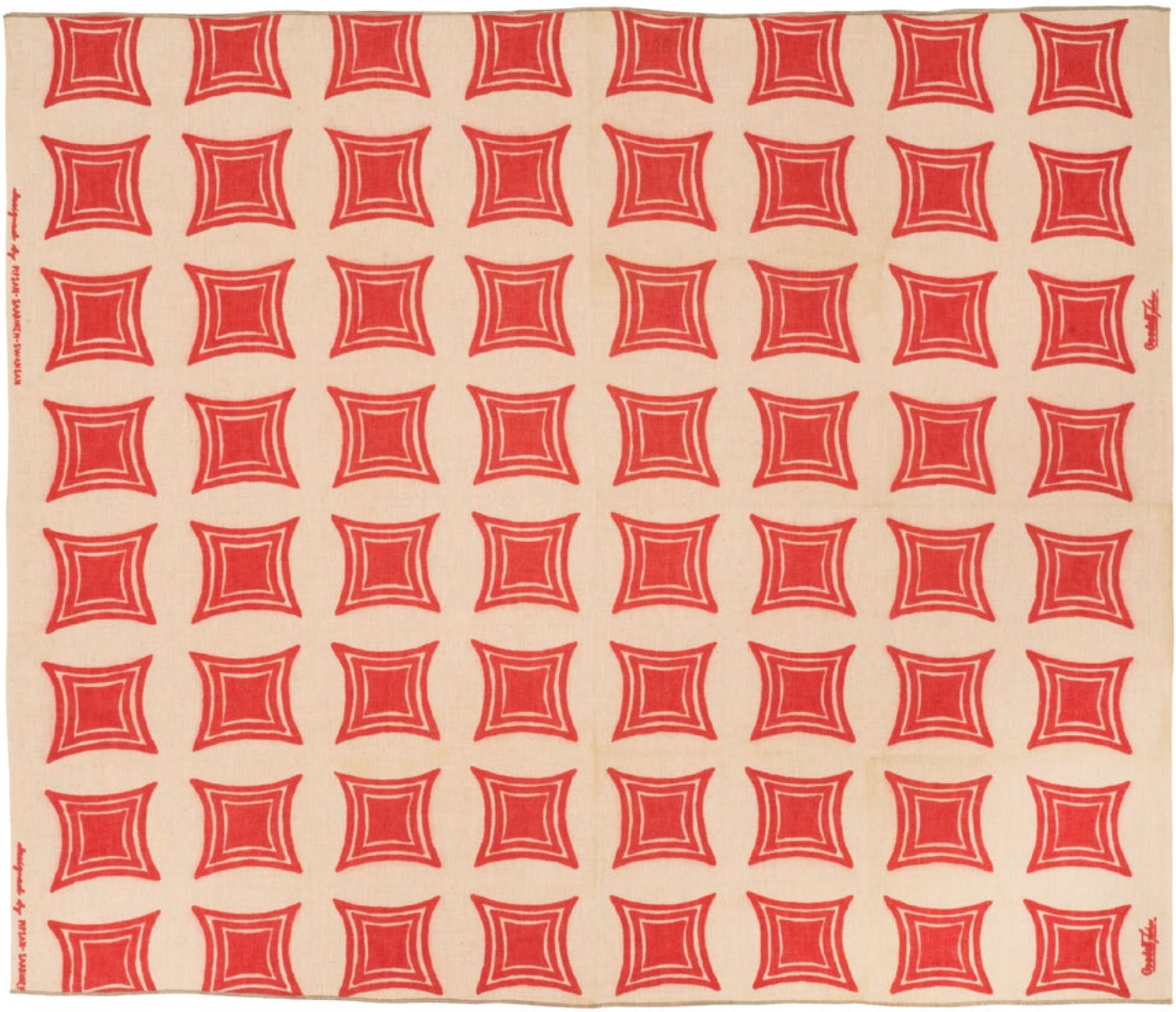
Saarinen Swanson's significance as a designer has been somewhat overshadowed, not only by her better-studied compatriots at Finland House but perhaps even more by her own famed family: her father, Eliel; her brother, Eero; and her mother, Loja. Only in recent years have scholars begun to reexamine Saarinen Swanson's unerring vision and her oeuvre apart from her parents and siblings, rightfully acknowledging her own importance. She had studied weaving, textile design, and ceramics at Finland's Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Helsinki before relocating with her family members in 1923 to Michigan, where they honed their design philosophies at Cranbrook. In 1926, she married architect J. Robert F. Swanson, a student of her father. Her husband partnered with Eliel and Eero at Saarinen Swanson & Saarinen in the late 1930s, eventually establishing Swanson Associates with Pipsan in 1947. In 1949, the husband-and-wife team introduced the Sol-Air furniture line, which was designed by Saarinen Swanson for the Ficks Reed Company and for which she received the MoMA Good Design distinction the following year.



Dining room at Finland House, 39 East 50th Street, ca. 1947

Courtesy PaavoTynell.org

The MoMA Good Design award was not Saarinen Swanson's first, though. *Purist's Choice*, as well as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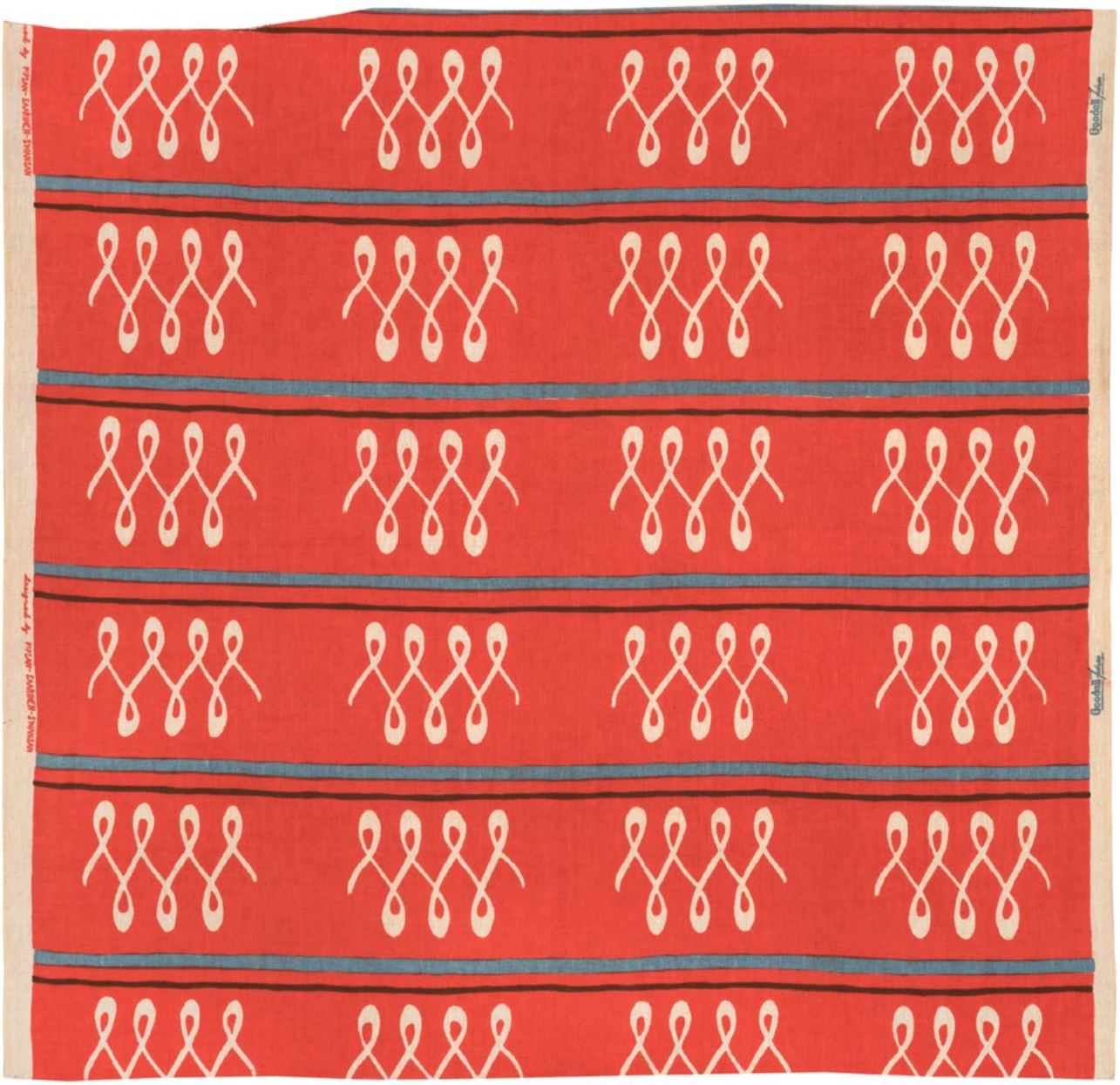
designed by PETER SARGENT-SWEDEN



Caprice, both screen-printed on a cotton-mohair-rayon blend, were two of the seven fabrics that she designed in 1947 for Goodall Fabrics and that won her the American Institute of Decorators award that year, the first time it was given for textile design. These were launched as part of the Saarinen-Swanson Group, a collection of coordinated furnishings and housewares offering affordable, modern comforts for middle-class postwar living that included "everything from loveseats to ash trays, all integrated in color and design," as they were described in an October 1947 *New York Times* article. The textiles were subsequently exhibited in the Fourth Biennial Exhibition of Textiles and Ceramics at Cranbrook, the Women's City Club of Detroit, and at the Smithsonian Institution in 1953.

Saarinen Swanson and her husband founded the Saarinen-Swanson Group with four other graduates of the Cranbrook Academy of Art: textile designer Marianne Strengell, sculptor Charles Dusenbury, ceramicist Lydia Winston, and architect Benjamin Baldwin. Eugene Haanel Cassidy's photographs of the Group's designs for the October 1947 issue of *House and Garden* give a sense of the mixed-and-matched, though mostly matched, aesthetic, for which Goodall and Saarinen Swanson developed a palette of fifteen distinct colors all intended to complement. Printed in "cerise," as the red tint was called by the Group, this length of *Purist's Choice* moves in harmony next to the quirky composition and chromatics of *Caprice*, in which curled squiggles on red alternate with bands of sooty black and foggy blue, hues dubbed "charcoal," and "turquoise," against a natural-colored fabric.

Saarinen Swanson alone was also responsible for the conception of the Saarinen-Swanson Group's glassware, produced by the United States Glass Company; metalwork, by Cray; and lighting, by the Mutual Sunset Lamp Company. The furniture, jointly designed with her husband and manufactured by Johnson, was veneered in local Michigan birch, a cost-efficient and attractive reminder of the designs from Pipsan's birthplace. The product line debuted in the couple's home state as part of the *Michigan Modern Home* exhibition at Hudson's department store in Detroit and was quickly a national hit. A harbinger of the coming age of good design to critics at the time, the products of the Saarinen-Swanson Group were considered "so far removed from the tawdry, purely commercial type of furnishings with which the markets have been deluged for many years that it looks as if the American public is in for better days," as one journalist stated in the *Chicago Tribune* in July 1947. In New York, one could purchase the Goodall fabrics at Finland House as well as at McCreery's on Fifth Avenue.

Inextricably connected to her two homelands, native and adoptive, Saarinen Swanson's fabrics for Goodall are an important and rare document of the designer at the height of her overlooked career. While lengths of her later textile designs of the 1950s and 1960s for Edward Raphael and Company are preserved in several museum collections, her fabrics for Goodall are scarce. The Cranbrook Art Museum preserves examples of *Purist's Choice* in the beige and cerise colorways (CAM 1990.7, CAM 1999.15) and *Curliques* (CAM 2000.9). Another length of *Purist's Choice* in beige is in the Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (2004.154, gift of the Cranbrook Art Museum), and a panel of *Low Tide* is in the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (2000-33-1).

MDA

FLORENCE SCREEN-PRINTED LINEN

Angelo Testa
American (Chicago), ca. 1954
108 x 51 in.

In today's design community, the name Angelo Testa (1921–1984) evokes a firm sense of place: Chicago, to be precise. Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, Testa had artistic aspirations early in life; he attended the New York School of Fine and Applied Arts, but was apparently not well regarded. Testa said they considered him their worst student and advised him to take up something other than architecture or design. Taking this assessment to heart, Testa shifted to study accounting at the University of Chicago, but after a miserable year, he enrolled at Chicago's Institute of Design, founded as "The New Bauhaus" in 1937, by László Moholy-Nagy. Testa's pivotal decision catalyzed his artistic future. Exposed to avant-garde European principles in the emerging modernist American Midwest, Testa became the Institute's first graduate in 1944, and quickly tasked himself with adapting Bauhaus ideals to the region's urban spaces. He founded his business, Angelo Testa & Company, in 1947 and remained based in Chicago for most of his life, selling his textile designs to leading interior furnishing-fabric companies like Cohama, Knoll, and F. Schumacher & Co., but mostly screen-printing his own yardage. Though Testa was thoroughly "rooted in Chicago," as Christa C. Mayer Thurman documented in her pioneering 1997 publication of this title, the artist's imagination went beyond the scope of his adopted city. *Florence*—a Medici-fueled exercise in form and line—is a perfect example of the architectural design vocabulary so characteristic of Testa's work.

The textile's title is the sly key to unlock what otherwise might be viewed as a pleasing pattern in the contemporary idiom. Screen-printed in a strict, Bauhaus-inspired palette of black, cement gray, and mustard yellow against a slick ground of creamy linen, *Florence* features horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines enlivened by an occasional arc. Solidly colored geometric shapes—acute and obtuse triangles, rectangles, and bisected circles—float within the ghostly scaffold lines, overlapping in structural arrangements suggesting towers, domes, and steeples. In analyzing the pattern, it appears Testa distilled these essences from the silhouette of Italy's most refined Renaissance site, Florence—its skyline as distinctive as Manhattan's skyscraper spine. The crown jewel of Florence's architectural landmarks, the sacred Piazza del Duomo complex, disintegrates into building fragments and flashes of dramatic shadow and glowing light in Testa's hands. Giotto's Campanile (bell tower) provides rectangular grandeur, while Filippo Brunelleschi's dome perched atop the basilica is the source of curved and hemispherical motifs. Broad-based triangles evoke the octagonal baptistry's roof, also designed by Brunelleschi. The most attenuated triangles echo a structure adjacent to the basilica—the prominent tower of the Badia Fiorentina church, Romanesque at its base and Gothic in its upper stages. As one reporter thoughtfully considered in a 1951 *Chicago Tribune* article about Testa's general approach to textile design, *Florence* is as "precise as a blueprint" with "imaginative interplays of shape against shape, shade against shade." An illustrated *Arts & Architecture* magazine feature on Testa's first solo show at the Boyd-Britton Galleries in Chicago, in September 1948, explained: "Mr. Testa has been instrumental in changing the attitude and character of the printed fabric, and has created designs which have an important relationship to architecture's space articulation. … His architectural background is reflected in a clarity of organization and the craftsman-like manner in which he arrives at many of the forms." Though most of Testa's designs are fairly described as nonobjective, a handful take cues from figural sources. His devotion to architectonics is evident in the surprising number of textiles like Florence named after landmark destinations—*Algiers*, *Boston*, *Times Square*—or after urban

concepts—*Cities*, *City Plan*—or building archetypes and configurational details—*Skyscraper*, *Labyrinth*, *Facade*, *Arches*, *Shingles*. Not only thinking within the grid, Testa internalized the notion that his patterns should remain pleasing when draped, not just when stretched taut for upholstery. He summed up his abiding philosophy in this manner: "Textile design must accept the space articulation which has related contemporary architecture to 20th century man and to 20th century living."

Testa is a rare example of a textile artist who was lauded and exhibited frequently during his lifetime. Between 1945 and 1958, he had appeared in at least fifty exhibitions. Not limited to producing high-end yard goods, he dabbled in plastic window treatments and shower curtains, neckties, bedspreads, rugs, paper placemats and napkins, and products at every price point. Testa's fabrics were collected by countless museums, universities, and galleries; his most enduring accolades are the awards received for submissions to the Good Design series of exhibitions co-organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Chicago's Merchandise Mart in the 1950s. The largest body of Testa's output (approximately fifty-seven examples) is found at the Art Institute of Chicago, though many of his textiles are preserved in renowned design collections including the Museum of Modern Art; the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; the Victoria & Albert Museum; and the Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin. A panel of *Florence* in this colorway is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art collection (M.2009.82.1). A fragment of this pattern, in a different colorway, is in the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, University of Wisconsin-Madison (P.R.US.0383).

LW

STENCILED COTTON

Designed by Sheouak Petaulassie, printed by Iyola Kingwatsiak
Inuit (Kinngait), ca. 1960
73 x 38 1/4 in.

James Houston has generally been credited with reviving and boosting Inuit arts to the level of a national Canadian industry through his introduction of printmaking to the community at Kinngait (formerly Cape Dorset) in Nunavet during the late 1950s. More recent literature, however, has reevaluated Houston's supervision and the highly collaborative nature of the printmaking projects at Cape Dorset Studios, now Kinngait Studios and still active. New attention has now been given to individual Inuit artists and to how they both continued and adapted their cultural traditions in the face of traumatic social, political, and economic change.

Legislature enacted in Canada over the course of the first half of the twentieth century—including new hunting and game regulations, forced relocation to settlements, and the establishment of schools—compelled the Inuit to abandon their former ways of life and livelihoods. These laws also brought the government's attempt to introduce a wage economy in the settlements through the foundation of cooperative businesses. In 1956, Houston, a civil administrator, laid out a plan for the craft cooperative that would become Kinngait Studios and which, in 1959, would join the Inuit-run West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative.

Under this initiative, Inuit artists were encouraged to interpret their centuries-old graphic traditions in new media, marrying the aesthetic of earlier "skin pictures," appliqued images sewn on seal or caribou hide, with the techniques of block printing and *katazome* (stencil dyeing) which Houston had studied in Japan. In 1959, Kinngait Studios published the first Cape Dorset Print Collection of works on paper, which launched the careers of some of its most celebrated artists like Parr (1896–1969). Albums of prints by Inuit artists are still produced annually at Kinngait Studios. The success of the Cape Dorset Print Collection led to the establishment of a fabric screen-printing enterprise at Kinngait which operated from 1963. As part of Canada's Expo 67, these screened fabrics won awards and were exhibited in the interiors of apartments at Habitat 67. Despite this success, poor sales forced the Co-op to close the textile-printing workshop in 1968. Over the next decades, the Co-op licensed fabric designs, but its previous textile activities were all but forgotten.

That changed in 2017, when over 150 fabrics were discovered at Dorset Fine Arts, the marketing division of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative. Now on long-term loan to the Textile Museum of Canada, these unique and heretofore unknown designs shed new light on textile printing in the early years at Kinngait Studios, which had been forgotten for half a century, much like the fabrics themselves.

This stenciled cotton textile, designed by artist Sheouak Petaulassie (Inuit, 1918–1961), is a rare surviving document of those early experiments at Kinngait Studios in the wake of the Print Collection's success and before the introduction of screens. Stylized birds in profile, framed by ovoid brackets, float in rows along the plain-weave cotton in shades of yellow, orange, blue, and black, interspersed with dynamic, undulating floral motifs stenciled in a persimmon red. The graphic minimalism and vibrant palette rival even the most iconic Pop designs of Marimekko, and the flowers convey an almost proto-psychedelia. More likely, the pulsating blossom probably

relates to depictions of the sun in prints by Sheouak's contemporary Kenojuak Ashevak (1923–2013), and the fowl resemble those in Sheouak's own *Shore Birds on Rocks* (1961, printed in 1962). At least three surviving pencil sketches by Sheouak depict animals in similar framing devices. Despite Sheouak's small oeuvre, this distinctive handling of positive and negative space has come to be particularly associated with her design style.

These early textiles were produced in the same manner as the first paper prints; the artist drew the image in graphite on paper and the design was sold to the Co-op, where printers translated it to a linoleum block, stone block, sealskin, or paper stencil. The seeming simplicity of this textile's composition is deceiving, as at least ten different stencils were used. Color has been applied unevenly in areas, and mixed pigments from unwashed stencils cast a greenish hue over the orange and yellow, owing to the fabric being a probable studio trial. The stencils were likely used many times over, which is also supported by the existence of a nearly identical length on cotton-polyester broadcloth, though without the flower, in the Dorset Fine Arts collection.

Unlike the screen-printed fabrics produced after 1963, which included artist, title, and studio information along the selvedge, these experimental textiles followed the works on paper from the Print Collection in their markings. This length, as well as others from the Dorset Fine Arts collection, includes Kinngait Studios' three chop marks noting artist, printer, and the workshop symbol, designed by Sheouak herself and still used today. In addition to the Kinngait symbol in black and Sheouak's name seal in syllabic Inuktitut is that of Iyola Kingwatsiak (1933–2000), who was one of the first printers working with Houston at Kinngait. This length also has "SHEOUAK IB," handwritten in black marker on the back, further evidence that this was a prototype circulated only within the workshop.

Rosemary Eaton, *Sheouak Petaulassie drawing beside her child in a tent, Cape Dorset, Nunavut*, ca. 1961.

Rosemary Gilliat Eaton fonds / Library and Archives Canada / e011181027

Sheouak died in 1961 at just thirty-eight years of age. Her tragically short life meant that she did not come to receive the accolades of fellow Kinggait artists like Parr and Kenojuak. Although she made just ten prints during her lifetime, and her work was only showcased in the 1960 and 1961 Cape Dorset Print Collections, Sheouak is remembered as having been one of the first Inuit artists to incorporate motifs from outside Inuit tradition—in this case,

southern Canadian iconography—into their work. Very little is known or recorded about her life, except for images by photojournalist Rosemary Eaton preserved at the Library and Archives Canada. In a series of photographs taken at Kinngait Studios in 1960, Sheouak holds her drawing board while listening to Co-op art adviser Terry Ryan. In another penetrating image, she sits in her tent sketching, pausing to acknowledge the camera.

Examples of Sheouak's drawings and prints are in museum collections including the Art Gallery of Windsor; Canadian Museum of History; Glenbow Museum; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; McMaster Museum of Art; Museum of Anthropology at UBC; and National Gallery of Canada.

MDA

PLUMES PRINTED COTTON

Paul Poiret for F. Schumacher & Co.
American (New York), 1930
74 x 30 1/2 in.

Paul Poiret (1879–1944)—dubbed the "erstwhile dictator of Paris moods and modes" by *Women's Wear Daily* in 1930—is arguably the most brilliant star in the twentieth-century fashion firmament. But brilliance did not come without controversy. At his peak in the 1910s, the couturier functioned as a Parisian oracle for those daring enough to embrace his heady blend of history, fantasy, and modernity. But in the 1920s, Poiret's exalted status as the "King of Fashion" gradually tarnished, and he sought new business ventures, especially in the United States. This decadent yet delicate textile, manufactured by F. Schumacher & Co. in America, represents one such exclusive partnership in Poiret's latter years.

In 1927, Poiret embarked on a U.S. lecture tour amid trouble in Paris. Poiret's inflammatory comments about American women's physiques infuriated the Aubert Syndicate, which had acquired Maison Poiret in 1924. Though it kept tempestuous Poiret at the creative helm, trouble continued to simmer: in March 1928, the syndicate asked Poiret to resign. The Maison alleged Poiret had violated his contract both in France and the United States by the misuse of the name "Paul Poiret," the rights to which the Maison claimed to have acquired in 1925. Poiret announced he would sever ties with his namesake maison and pursue creative outlets in the United States—whether with "a dress manufacturer, a fabric house or a Hollywood film enterprise." The same year he broke with the syndicate, "Paul Poiret Personal Prints" were advertised in U.S. publications by Bloomsburg Silk Mill in cooperation with the United Textile Print Works. However, the couturier expressed his cynical view of Yankee businessmen in his 1931 autobiography: "This propensity of all their manufacturers to enter into contact with famous men in order to be able to appropriate their names and profit by them is an American characteristic. How many of them made me magnificent offers." It is tempting to wonder if he included Frederic Schumacher and his nephew Pierre Pozier in this condescending critique.

Parisian-born Frederic Shumacher founded his eponymous U.S. company in 1889 as an importer of fine European textiles. Economic circumstances in the late nineteenth century led F. Schumacher & Co. to begin sourcing textiles domestically; in 1895, the firm established its own mill and populated it with expert European weavers. Soon, the firm was America's high-style standard bearer, producing luxurious, historically inspired furnishing fabrics that rivaled the firm's imports. But Schumacher's business acumen extended to creating future classics, and he trusted Pozier, who joined the firm in 1899, to forecast the trends. Pozier introduced "extreme patterns" to the line not only with commercial success in mind, but also prestige. He leapt past the toile de Jouy and English chintz reproductions Schumacher had been printing since the 1890s and into fresh territory with Poiret's collection—the company's first exclusive with any design-world luminary. The line was produced as printed fabrics and included at least eight designs. A trade advertisement from the spring of 1930 touted Schumacher's privilege in offering "a rare collection of printed fabrics made exclusively … by an artist of unusual renown … Poiret's conceptions are unique—his designs are bold—his interpretations personal—his colorations powerful yet delicate."

Rendered in a desaturated Fauvist palette, *Plumes* is a florid, though not floral, pattern. Its clusters of lush ostrich feathers with cascading barbules feels intimately connected to the aigrette, an

upwardly-fanning tuft perched atop a turban or headband that is one of Poiret's most iconic orientalist signatures. Laid out in a half-drop, thirty-inch repeat that consumes most of the textile's surface, the softly falling coral, lavender, lilac, and yolk-yellow plumes tremble over a celadon-stippled ground. Each feather's dimensionality is shaped by washes of tea-stained color, while highlights are imparted through reserved portions of the off-white ground fabric; only the central coral feather is also shaded with lilac for dramatic flourish. The translucency of the exceptionally fine cotton muslin enhances *Plumes*' abundant elegance. Poiret's name and the exclusivity of his designs to the Schumacher company were shrewdly printed on the selvedge.

In 1932, the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, exhibited contemporary fabrics and included a Poiret design described as "an adaptation of the emblem of the Prince of Wales, which has three ostrich plumes." Curiously, though Poiret was notorious for seeking publicity to keep his name at the tips of wagging tongues, there was apparently little he or the Schumacher company did to promote this line of fabrics in the press. And though Maison Poiret was finally liquidated in 1931, his namesake Schumacher collection lives on: *Plumes*, as well as a related design called *Plumes et Rubans* and six other patterns, is still offered by the company as a wall covering and is a testament to the staying power of a fashion rebel.

A panel of *Plumes* in this colorway is in the Art Institute of Chicago (1993.333).

LW

RHUMBOLERO and *SKYLINE* SCREEN-PRINTED LINENS

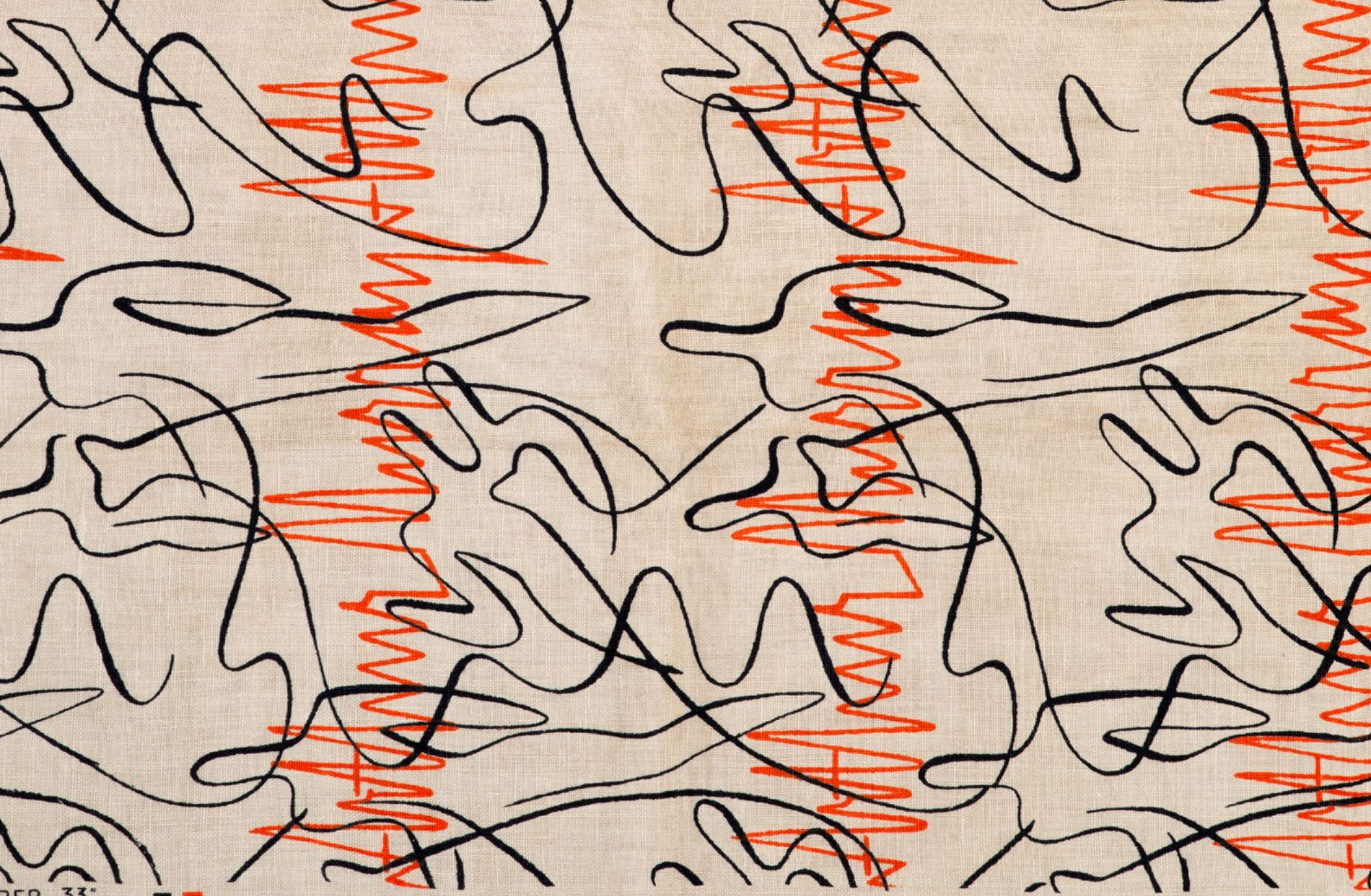
George Farkas and Walter Baermann for L. Anton Maix
American (New York), 1950–52
Rhumbolero: 32 x 64 1/4 in.
Skyline: 35 x 50 in.

The business partnership of George Farkas (1905–1961) and Walter Baermann (1903–1972) was brief, but fruitful. Both immigrants with illustrious backgrounds, the duo joined forces sometime between 1950 and 1951. Their earliest accolades in the press began in mid-1951 for stylish yet affordable furniture noteworthy for innovative materials and maximum comfort without bulkiness. Another pressworthy project tackled the unified decor of a three-room model apartment at New York's Warwick Hotel. What brought these experienced industrial designers with jack-of-all-trades abilities together in the first place? It is not entirely clear, but entrepreneur Larry Maix might be the missing link.

George Farkas was born in Budapest, Hungary; he studied architecture and interior design at the Academie des Beaux Arts in Budapest, and then progressed to the Academy for Industrial Design in Vienna. His European career flourished in the 1930s, with projects demonstrating his versatility: he designed sets for the Hungarian National Theater, and also for the UFA motion picture studio in Germany; bars and gaming rooms in Monte Carlo; homes in the English countryside; and even yachts for clients on the Riviera. In 1939, Farkas immigrated to the United States, settling and establishing his own firm in Miami Beach in 1940. Farkas's interior projects often incorporated his specialty textiles, and his fabrics and wallpapers were marketed by firms like F. Schumacher & Co. and Katzenbach & Warren, Inc. In 1958, the *Miami News* marveled at his versatility: "His designs of exteriors, interiors and things plain and fancy—they range from watches for Switzerland, posters for Dunhill, airports, fabrics, furniture and a dozen other totally unrelated items, all linked together by that one factor, good design!"

German-born Walter Baermann earned two master's degrees and a PhD in Munich between 1924 and 1927, and came to the United States in 1928 at Joseph Urban's invitation. He worked alongside pioneers of the American moderne style in product design and architecture, but soon his interests shifted to studying—and practicing—U.S. manufacturing methods, opening his own industrial design firm in 1933. Baermann was a multidisciplinary designer, inventing soundproof partitions for interiors and patenting a panoply of things from vending machines and CPR manikins to tilt-and-swivel chair mechanisms. Throughout his career, Baermann cultivated academic authority. In 1937, he was appointed faculty head for the California Institute of Technology; shortly thereafter, in 1941, Baermann headed the Design Department of Cranbrook Academy of Art. After serving as chief of graphics in the Office of Civilian Defense during the war, he formed Baermann & Associates, in New York, in 1944. From 1944 through the end of 1945, Baermann also led Knoll's Planning Unit, the industry titan's newly established product and furnishings program. His experience to this point cemented a lifelong conviction that psychosociological, technological, and cultural considerations were essential to intelligent engineering.

In their time as partners, these two well-rounded designers conceptualized textiles for L. Anton Maix that pulse with energy. Larry Maix's knack for selecting designers to build his line of screen-printed furnishing textiles is legendary. He had come to appreciate contemporary design in the late


REP. 33"
1
2
"RHUMBOLERO" by FARKAS and BAERMAN


"SKYLINE" by FARKAS and BAERMAN
PATT. REP. 30%
L. ANTON MAIX FABRICS N.Y.C.

1930s after taking a sales position at the Modernage Furniture Company in Miami, and developed his keen sense for textile trends and marketing through his years working for Hans Knoll, also as a salesperson. These professional experiences must have connected Maix with his friend, Farkas (the architect for Modernage's new building, opened in 1941), and Baermann, who overlapped with Maix's tenure at Knoll. If Maix introduced the pair for the purposes of extracting clever designs from their fertile minds, he succeeded.

Skyline's screen-printed skeletal vista has the effect of an urban Rorschach test. The horizontal pattern unit is mirror-imaged across the textile's vertical centerline, with sketchy black outlines superimposed over blocks and dabs of biscuit tan and mocha on the off-white, plain-woven, Belgian linen Maix standardly employed. Combinations of shapes, lines, and negative space suggest windows, towers, smokestacks, stoops, and causeways—essential metropolitan elements, sometimes rendered in aerial perspective. Yet there is an invigorating naturalness about *Skyline*, a lacy, foliate quality that was admired by Farkas, who was quoted by Maix in 1952 as saying: "even our modern skylines have always been with us if we had studied the design on a leaf with points."

In a different vein, *Rhumbolero* superimposes fluid, inky black lines over a jagged, traffic-cone-orange through line. With closer inspection, the seemingly abstract calligraphic strokes emerge as dancers in sweeping motion: ladies in strapless gowns are dipped and guided by gentleman partners. They glide past the peaks and valleys of an electrocardiogram readout spelling "Arthur Murray," the celebrated impresario and founder of franchised ballroom dance instruction studios. Though these literal aspects are thinly disguised, the design must have been sanctioned by Arthur Murray's corporate office—or perhaps it was a special commission—as one iteration of the dancing couple is an almost line-for-line adaptation of the company's logo. Farkas was no stranger to designing brand-specific textiles: in 1948, he whipped up a confection of tropical-fruit and ice-cream-sundae printed fabric for the Howard Johnson restaurant chain. That Larry Maix was also open to custom orders points to the Arthur Murray studio's involvement. Sporting a portmanteau of *rhumba* and *bolero*, this pattern's title overtly alludes to suave styles of "magic steps" learned from the studios' instructors.

Perhaps resulting from their work with Maix, the pair designed a collection of fifteen screen prints for the Forster Textile Mills in January 1952. Independently, Farkas collaborated with ceramicist Russell Wright later that year on a coordinated fabric collection "for a northern textile concern" (possibly Maix) in which Wright designed the woven patterns and Farkas the companion prints. For reasons unknown, Farkas and Baermann dissolved their partnership in 1952. Farkas created at least one more pattern for Maix called *Lumiere Rouge*, which won a Good Design award from the Museum of Modern Art in 1953. For a brief mid-century moment, however, Farkas's approach to design—more "a matter of discovery than creation," in his words—and Baermann's erudite yet practical assessment that "an industrial designer is a merchandiser" were melded into a fine enterprise.

Skyline is illustrated in William Hennessey's book *Modern Furnishings for the Home* (1952); the caption noted "color as desired," indicating its customizable quality, but curiously lists only Farkas as the designer. A panel of this textile is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art collection (M.2009.86.3).

LW


Camels
AUTOMAT
PLANTERS PEANUTS
Camels
AUTOMAT
PLANTERS PEANUTS
PLANTERS PEANUTS

NEW YORK PANORAMA, FORT MILL PHOTOMONTAGE, and WORLD'S FAIR PHOTOMONTAGE

American (New York), ca. 1934 and 1939
New York Panorama: 41 x 34 in.
Fort Mill Photomontage: 24 1/2 x 35 1/2 in.
World's Fair Photomontage: 35 1/2 x 35 in., 71 x 35 in.

Though there were attempts at photographic printing on textiles in the nineteenth century, it was not until the early twentieth century that fabrics printed with snapshot imagery gained traction in the United States. In the 1920s, Edward Steichen's ingenious photographic patterns for the Stehli Silk Corporation displayed fine art sensibilities; other manufacturers were more practical, printing photographs of fur pelts on pile fabrics, for example. Marketing these "camera prints" took an exciting turn in the 1930s with a novel approach: the photomontage print. This technique dates to the 1850s when pioneering photographers experimented with "combination printing"—purposefully mixing portions of negatives for comical, or sometimes sublime, effect. When pressed into Dadaist practice in the late 1910s, however, various photographs or negatives were cobbled together, creating avant-garde visualizations of modernity and subverting the medium's documentary function. The jump from artistic to commercial applications in the 1930s for this altered-reality expression is epitomized by these three distinctive patterns.

Two of these designs were produced by the Cohn-Hall-Marx Company, also known as Cohama. A textile converter in New York, Cohn-Hall-Marx bought unfinished gray goods from textile mills and sent them to finishing plants for printing. The company must have perceived a receptive market for Gotham City-themed fabrics: Ruth Reeves's *Manhattan* (1930), a prismatic array of recognizable locales, may have inspired their *New York Panorama*. This dynamic, sepia-toned photographic amalgamation of New York City sites is surrealistic in feats of scale and placement: the Chrysler Building balances on a Brooklyn Bridge tower and the Empire State Building sidles up to the Manhattan Bridge. Landmarks including Lady Liberty, Grant's Tomb, Castle Clinton, and the Washington Square Arch pepper the reconstituted landscape. Two factors help date this pattern: one photo shows a marquee advertising James Cagney in *The Saint Louis Kid*, a film which debuted in 1934—meaning the textile cannot predate this. Nor can its manufacture be later than 1938, as in that year buyers previewed photomontage print dresses at an apparel show in Chicago: one print was described as "depicting a conglomeration of New York scenes"—surely *New York Panorama*.

New York Panorama's title is known from Cohn-Hall-Marx correspondence. In a letter dated July 19, 1938, Hope Skillman, a textile designer working for their Ameritex division (formed with the goal of creating "novelties that are American in idea and appeal"), wrote the following to a New York World's Fair representative:

> As you suggested in our telephone conversation, I am herewith making a request for Department S of Cohn Hall Marx to design and manufacture one World's Fair pattern. Our Department S would like to make a color photographic montage similar to the enclosed NEW YORK PANORAMA. This photo-montage pattern has been a tremendous thing ... and they feel that they can do equally well in color with the World's Fair. ... if agreeable,

> we will also need permission to photograph either the actual World's Fair buildings or models of them. We also require rather quick action on this.

Allusively, "Department S" refers to Seneca Textile Corporation, which merged with Cohn-Hall-Marx in 1928. As described, this print of the World's Fair densely—and near-seamlessly—blends photographs of architectural maquettes, and possibly some site photographs, showing pavilions, exhibits, and amusements from New York's World's Fair held April 30, 1939 to October 27, 1940. The double-prowed Marine Transportation Building, ovoid Chrysler Motors Building, and aerodynamic Aviation Building are all nestled together, much as they were at the fair. But, streamlined structures like the DuPont Chemistry Building and the RCA Building are jumbled with disparate fairground locations like the Court of Peace/United States Government Building complex and the Textiles Building. Two distinct views of the fair's administration headquarters are shown simultaneously: its neoclassical facade and futuristic, canopied Bridge of Tomorrow. Presiding over all, the photomontagist placed the fair's symbolic Trylon and Perisphere as the repeat's focal point. For the polychromatic version, the pattern was first printed in grayscale, then enhanced with several significant colors as described in "World's Fair Mural Colors Seen in Prints," in the *Decatur Herald*, April 3, 1939: the dusty "plaster pink," sulfurous yellow, vivid royal blue, and aqua were fashionably derived from fairground decorations.

These prints have been misattributed to Springs Cotton Mills, but Skillman's letter—plus the fact that World's Fair licenses were granted to Cohn-Hall-Marx, rather than to Springs—confirms

otherwise. However, one photomontage textile is accurately associated with Springs Cotton Mills. In January 1939, the *Greenville News* of South Carolina (where numerous Springs plants were located) recounted the story of the Fort Mill photomontage textile: "One of the most unique … ideas seen lately is the photomontage originated by Elliott Springs, president of the Springs Cotton mills. On a very fine piece of broadcloth manufactured in one of his plants is printed scenes depicting Mr. Springs' life." Springs's nostalgic black-and-white print is a photographic hodgepodge of his family's history: aerial and interior views of his mills (including the titular plant); Springs beaming behind an obsolete combing machine; Springs and executives posed with the company plane; and a photograph of Springs and office staff with a framed portrait of his grandfather, mill founder Colonel Leroy Springs. In the 1949 edition of Springs's book, *Clothes Make the Man*, this photomontage is used for the endpapers, and depicted within as a Springmaid pillowcase. He also mentions it in a letter concerning gimmicks for selling sheets. Springs recounts "fancy" promotions, ending with the failure of his photographic fever-dream: "Then I took a lot of pictures around the different plants, inside and out, and had a montage made of them. I printed this on a pillowcase. … It really was a great addition to interior decoration, but everybody complained about nightmares."

How were these photomontages printed on cloth? In 1930, M. D. C. Crawford, textile scholar and editor at *Women's Wear Daily*, outlined the state-of-the-art leap from the photogravure process

"For sweet dreams sleep on SPRINGMAID Pictorial Pillow Cases," Elliott White Springs, *Clothes Make the Man*, 1949, p. 104

Collection of Leigh Wishner

on plates to that for roller-printing, by which photographic prints were "made on a gelatine paper. … then transferred to a copper roller, and the print developed." After the paper was removed, the gelatine left on the roller was exposed to light, leaving the insoluble pattern ready for immersion in acid, which etched the photographic reproduction in the roller's surface. But, by 1937, photographic screen-printing was possible. Accurately reproducing continuous tone was achieved through the halftone method, by which tonal expanses are broken into miniscule dots. All three of these textiles exhibit halftone shading and were most likely screen-printed given their sizable repeats ranging from seventeen-and-a-half inches (Cohn-Hall-Marx) to nineteen inches (Springs).

Examples of *New York Panorama* in a blue colorway are in the Brooklyn Museum (1997.7) and the RISD Museum (2009.25); a red colorway is in the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (1988-55-1); and a black colorway is in the Art Institute of Chicago (1978.360). A black-on-yellow cloth version, donated by Cohn-Hall-Marx, is in the New York Historical Society (1941.1099). The World's Fair print, in this colorway, is in the RISD Museum (1995.007); monochromatic blue and burgundy versions are in the Art Institute of Chicago (1942.247 and 1942.248). In addition to cotton, the World's Fair pattern was also printed on sheer silk.

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