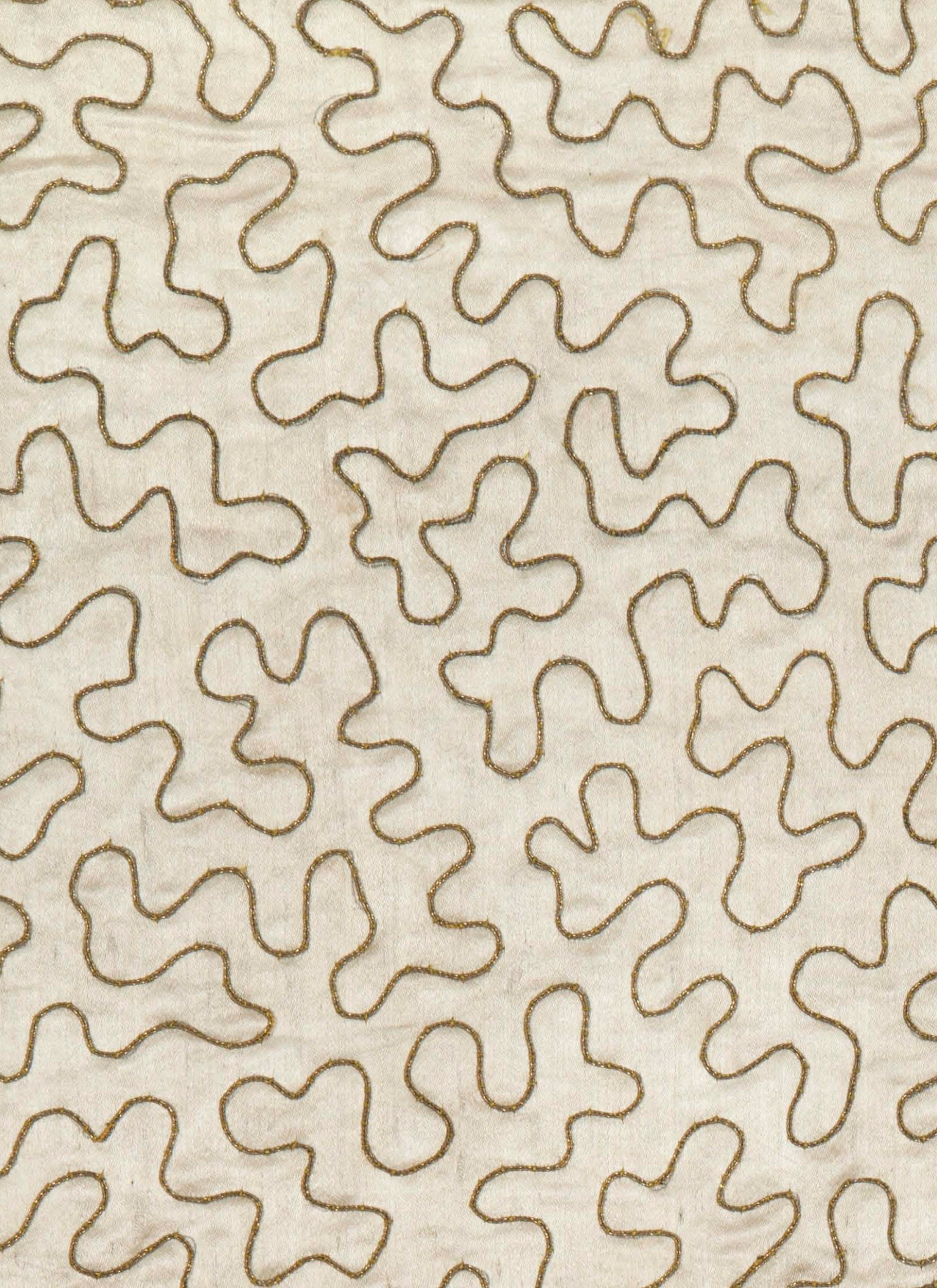


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ROBE À L'ANGLAISE OF BIZARRE SILK LAMPAS

English, ca. 1775 (the silk ca. 1708–10)

An influx of exotic goods that followed the founding of the various East India trading companies in the second half of the seventeenth century significantly changed the look of European clothing as well as all other forms of decorative art. European silk designers, in particular, enthusiastically interpreted, and misinterpreted, motifs, grafting unfamiliar flora, fauna, and architecture onto their own prevailing late baroque vocabulary.

The extraordinary silk used to make this dress is the result of that decorative commingling. Like many so-called bizarre silks, its motifs defy simple description. A fountain, with a lobed basin filled with ripples suggesting a gentle breeze, serves as the grounding from which an incongruous mélange of plant forms branches out. Three arcing jets of water shoot from starburst-shaped rosettes perched on a cross between cacti and Chinese scholar's rocks, which sprout Persianate *sax* leaves.

Probably produced in the English silk-weaving center of Spitalfields, this silk bears many comparable motifs to those found in the designs of James Leman (1688–1745), a top pattern drawer and weaver there in the early eighteenth century, whose designs survive at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Leman employed similar cacti-cum-scholar's rock motifs in several designs, and the dendritic root issuing from the fountain, as well as the meandering branch bearing disparate fruit and flowers, are also found in his work.

This silk is also, however, highly unusual in a number of respects. Instead of the typical damask weave characteristic of most bizarres, here the ground is a lustrous pearl-grey satin, producing a shimmering setting for the brocaded patterning. While bizarre silks often incorporate fanciful architectural motifs, fountains are extremely rare (Leman design E.1861:46-1991 is an exception). Many chinoiserie motifs used in Western European art were taken from the illustrated accounts of China by Jesuits and travelers, but a precise source for the unique combination found on this silk has not been identified. The craggy scholar's rocks (called *gongsbi* in Chinese) may have been derived from ceramics, or from wallpapers imported from China into London beginning in the seventeenth century. A possible source for the fountain is the collection of engravings known as the *Livre de Fontaines* by Daniel Marot, published in the Hague, in 1701, which contains images of several fountains with arcing streams of water.

The dynamic jets of water sympathetically mirror the generous curve of the skirt in the dress's current configuration. Originally, the silk probably made up a loose-fitting mantua, or slightly later *robe volante* (*sacque*), which required long, unbroken lengths of silk from neck to hem. In transforming the garment into a fashionable closed robe in the 1770s, the seamstress stitched these panels into flat pressed pleats tapering to a point at the rear waist that continue unbroken to the skirt in a style known as *en fourreau* (sheath). The sleeves, updated with lavish ruched cuffs *en sabot* common in the late 1770s, were probably transferred from the original garment as they are unusually full for that date, and the pattern of the silk is precisely mirrored across both arms, suggesting a lack of alteration. An English gown in the Laing Art Gallery made of comparable bizarre silk from about the same date may represent the original form of this dress; see Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 1* (1972, p. 22).

Several Leman designs were executed in an equally limited palette of yellow ocher and green, possibly signifying a trend of combining these acidic colors (see E.1861:83-1991, E.1861:87-1991, E.1861:99-1991, and E.1861:103-1991). Most of these, however, bear dates of manufacture in the summer months, potentially indicating the verdant color scheme's seasonal popularity. A silk in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has a similar palette (2005.462, ca. 1712–15).

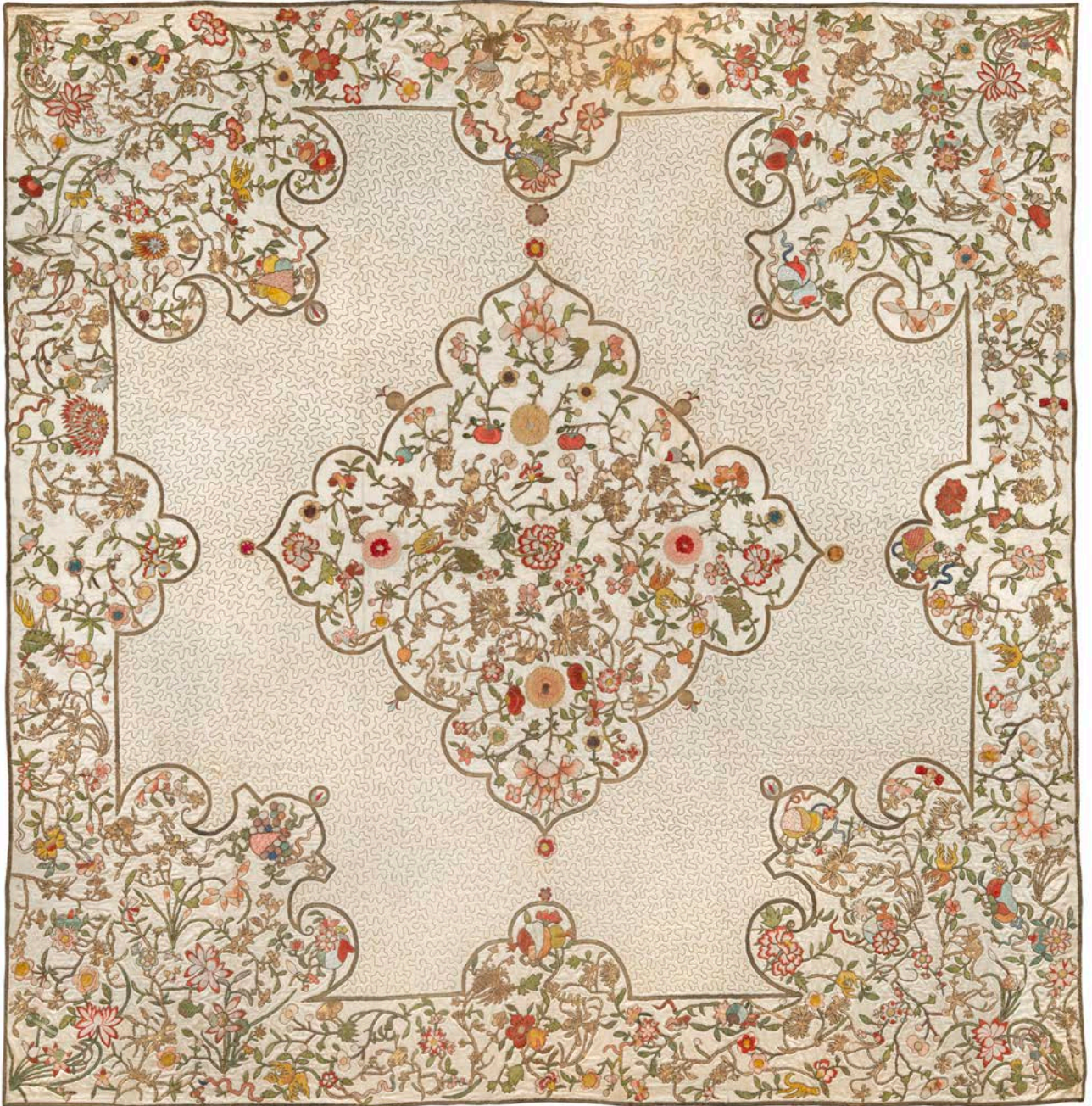
Closely related in terms of design are a christening blanket, or cradle cover, also in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (42.465, ca. 1709) and a man's dressing gown at the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.281-1983, the silk ca. 1707–8). Both of these include arcing balustrade motifs in double straight repeats that can be compared to the jets of water on this dress and have solid satin grounds.

Provenance: Worn by Frances Clement (1723–1765) of Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, at her marriage to Reverend Thomas Smith, ca. 1750; subsequently worn by a descendant, possibly her daughter Frances at her own wedding in 1777.

WDG







COVERLET WITH APPLIQUÉ CHINESE EMBROIDERY

English, early 18th century

When in 2013, the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented the groundbreaking exhibition *Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500–1800*, the influence of global trade on textile history was made apparent as an exciting flow and transfer of information, technology, and ideas. Rather than considering clothing or household items that combine disparate aesthetics as hybrids in the decorative arts, the exhibition placed these items in the fascinating contexts of trade routes, intentional marketing, and the search for innovations. The over one hundred items in *Interwoven Globe*, including many from the Cora Ginsburg gallery, revealed vibrant design influences. This coverlet also tells some of these stories.

In this sumptuous textile, late seventeenth-century Chinese embroidery, with a profuse use of couched metallic threads and polychrome silk, has been appliquéd onto a silk satin ground of English origin. The coverlet presents a lush display of florals including cherry blossoms, chrysanthemums, and peonies, as well as jagged branches and exotic forms, all set densely amid a classic design format.

The lobed central medallion and borders on all four sides, with large corner motifs that extend significantly into the body of the coverlet, reduce the amount of relatively unadorned background to a small area, creating a highly ornate bed covering. This composition of design components derives from Persian, Indian, and Chinese carpets and cloths that, through trade items made in the East for Western markets and imported in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, influenced needlework and other decorative arts.

Most of the embroidery's texture is achieved through the use of metallic threads and silk filling stitches, while some of the flowers are executed in appliquéd ribbon work, providing additional depth. When this coverlet was made in England in the early eighteenth century, luxury textiles ornamented with gold had been used for many centuries in China, where the penchant for this metal—both the material and the color—conveyed not only status but also cosmological significance. Thoroughly enhanced with various types of metallic threads, composed of both gold and silver, this coverlet makes extravagant use of these costly materials: beyond filling stitches and outlining borders of flowers and leaves, the metallic patterning fills branches, flowers, and fruits, as well as being used to form bold strapwork borders.

Metallic threads were also a part of English embroidery during this period. The complex history of the industry in England of making metallic threads, used for weaving and needlework, is outlined in the 1892 book *History of the Worshipful Company of Gold and Silver Wyre-drawers and of the Origin and Development of the Industry which the Company Represents*. In 1693, an organization was formed for the Trade, Art, and Mystery of Drawing and Flatting of Gold and Silver Wyre; and Making and Spinning of Gold and Silver Thread and Stuffe. Interestingly in this coverlet, the appliquéd Chinese elements are surrounded by metallic threads applied to the silk satin ground fabric to create a vermicelli-patterned background.

Vermicelli grounds use squiggly lines to fill otherwise unadorned backgrounds; while the word is from the Italian for “little worms,” the design is thought to derive from India, where it is found on embroideries and palampores. Another English example of using couched metallic thread in a background vermicelli patterning appears on a sleeved waistcoat, with Eastern-inspired motifs worked in silk, also from the early eighteenth century, illustrated in Therle Hughes, *English Domestic Needlework 1660–1860* (1961, pl. 5). More commonly in English embroideries of the eighteenth century, the vermicelli ground, also known as the Stormont pattern, is seen worked in yellow silk on a linen ground for both items of clothing and household decorations. Hughes notes that “by the 18th century . . . there was for example, the meandering vermicular line worked in silver gilt thread to form an all-over background to designs in coloured silks and copied widely in yellow silk.”

This coverlet, with its overabundance of metallic threads used almost to excess, both in the Chinese embroidery and the added English elements, exemplifies the eighteenth-century practice of gathering design features and rich materials from around the globe to make luxury textiles.

62 x 52 in.

DG





NETTED SILK CAP

English, ca. 1800

Made around the year 1800, this netted cap is a rare example of a neoclassical headdress produced at a moment when a rage for all things *à l'antique* was spreading throughout Europe. In the wake of the American and French Revolutions, aristocratic excess was out, and democratic simplicity was in.

By 1798, the prevailing decorative style was universally “antique,” reported the famed British expat Helen Maria Williams from Paris that year, so that “every couch resembles that of Pericles, every chair those of Cicero.” Women of style coordinated their dress to these surroundings, adopting “the loose light drapery, the naked arm, the bare bosom,” and “the twisting tresses” modeled after ancient art. Milliners and dressmakers reportedly visited the Louvre to consult ancient statuary for inspiration. As Williams noted:

The most fashionable hairdresser of Paris, in order to accommodate himself to the classical taste of his fair customers, is provided with a variety of antique busts as models; and when he waits on a lady, enquires if she chuses to be drest that day, à la Cleopatre, la Dianne, or la Psyche?

Just as light muslin shifts in the classical style replaced heavy silk brocades, the topiary-like periwigs so identified with the last years of the ancien régime also disappeared, in favor of more natural coiffures that would, theoretically, make use only of a woman’s own hair.

Dressing the hair *à l'antique*, however, was an undertaking just as elaborate as maintaining the complicated arrangements of curls and loops that characterized hairstyles in the 1780s. Between about 1795 and 1805, it invariably required the front hair—called the “skirts” in England—to be formed into curls around the face (here approximated by a period false fringe), while the “hind hair” was drawn back into a large chignon, or bun, placed high on the crown of the head or low around the nape of the neck. At this date, the use of hot irons to curl hair was a risky proposition, requiring a delicate touch and precise timing so as not to singe the locks. A combination of greasy pomades and curling papers was preferable, though equally difficult to maintain. Long braids—either natural or artificial—were used to hold the oblong coiffure in place, particularly around and over the chignon. Some women even resorted to wearing full toupees (also called *cache-folies* in French) in the “coiffure Grecque” style.

This headdress would have alleviated some of the burden of maintaining such complicated styles by simulating and augmenting the hair below. Brown silk satin encases thick wool cord to form plaits around the temple and crown. More brown satin ribbon, dressed in origami-like folds, enhances the area just above the forehead and along the upper braid, topped with a matching looped bow. The silk net that forms the main body of the cap was interlaced to shape to support the chignon at the rear.

Around this date, several fashion plates show silk net used to hold the chignon in place in a sort of snood, or caul, another allusion to classical precedents. An early example can be found in the *Gallery of Fashion* for September 1796. Of white silk net trimmed with matching white satin ribbon formed, as here, into bows, the net covered a chignon at the back while allowing the hair around the face to fall in “easy curls.” In ancient Greece, the word *kekryphalos* described several types of hair net or light cloth used to bind up the tresses of women; these could range from opulent gold nets to simple handkerchiefs. Indeed, headdresses called “handkerchiefs,” resembling this example, can be found in English periodicals around 1800. However, an item of soft headwear would have been referred to as a “cap,” or *capote* in French, to differentiate it from stiffer bonnets. A comparable *capote* with net was featured in the *Journal des dames et des modes* in year 9 (1801, pl. 269, no. 4).

The flexible “antique” style persisted through the first decade of the nineteenth century. This piece could date from as early as the late 1790s to about 1808. In 1807, the *Lady’s Monthly Museum* featured several images of women with hair “fashionably dressed” in a style nearly identical to the one mimicked by this cap.

WDG



GAUZE EVENING DRESS WITH SELF-FABRIC TRIMMING

English, ca. 1823–24

The distinctive bodice of this elegant evening gown made from shaded striped silk gauze is the clue to its date. Although its overall shape—including the short, puffed-and-banded sleeves; slightly raised waist; and gored, trimmed skirt—are typical of the first half of the 1820s, the crossover bodice in both front and back was noted in the June 1823 issue of *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics*. The magazine's regular column French Female Fashions informed readers that, "besides the *corsage en blouse*, there are three others also in favour, all of which fasten behind. One crosses in front and behind; another is much ornamented in the centre of the bust; and the third is draped *à la Sévigné* from the shoulder to the *ceinture*." Published in London, on a monthly basis, by Rudolph Ackermann between 1809 and 1829, the all-encompassing *Repository* appealed to women "of the *ton*," as fashionable aristocrats were called in the press, who wished to keep up with the latest modes originating in the English capital and across the Channel, as well as French fashion terminology. While the information provided in French Female Fashions was ostensibly communicated in the form of a letter to Sophia from her Paris correspondent Eudocia, it is likely that Ackermann's editor had access to the leading French fashion periodical, *Journal des dames et des modes*, published from 1797 to 1839. In its March 5, 1823, issue, the *Journal* announced that the vogue for crossover bodices was becoming more popular every day, and the following month, the editor described four types of bodices seen at the theater including a "corsage croisé devant et derrière" and three others that correspond to those highlighted in the *Repository*.

Numerous references in *The Ladies' Monthly Museum*, *La Belle Assemblée*, and the *Repository* from the mid-1810s to the mid-1820s affirm the popularity of gauze—among other transparent fabrics—for "full dress," hats, and turbans. In April 1823, Ackermann's publication declared that "white and colored gauze, and tulle over satin to correspond, are . . . much worn" and in July, "the favourite materials for young ladies' dresses are, gauze, tulle, and net, over white, or in some instances coloured satin." Although this subtly hued gauze may have been produced in Spitalfields, the center of the silk-weaving industry in East London, it could also have been imported from the Continent; English fashion periodicals from these years sometimes specify Italian gauze in their descriptions of headdresses and evening gowns. In 1824, shaded striped fabrics were a fashionable choice for both day and evening; that year, the *Repository* illustrated morning dresses of "rainbow-shaded *gros de Naples*," "shaded yellow *jaconet* muslin," and "shaded striped silk . . . *gros de Naples*," as well as a formal "gold-colour striped gossamer dress" (see p. 14 top left and right). Here, the sheerness of the gauze enhances the gradated tones of plum red, pale pink, and ivory that alternate with light olive. English and French fashion magazines regularly created fanciful names for stylish colors to boost their novelty and consumers' interest. While the gown's dominant shade of plum red may have had a specific descriptor, perhaps it represents one of the "good many different shades of rose" that the *Repository* identified among other "fashionable colours" in February 1823.

The diagonal lines created by the draped and softly pleated gauze of the bodice front are typical of the early-to-mid-1820s. Whether formed as here, or by tightly pleating the fabric from the shoulders into the waist, these dressmaking techniques served to emphasize or minimize the bust. In May 1823, the *Journal des dames et des modes* wryly commented that the fashion for V-shaped draperies "benefits" the chest, while flat pleats "come to the aid of" more full-figured women. The self-fabric trimmings at the hem of the gown, in the form of large stylized leaves edged with pink and emerald-green satin bias binding, and three narrow satin rouleaux accentuate and hold out the fullness of the lower skirt. In 1823, the *Journal* illustrated two gauze evening dresses, one pink (February 15, pl. 2130) and one white (November 20, pl. 2195), both with matching gauze "bouillons" (puffs of fabric), satin ribbons, and rouleaux, as well as a blue silk day dress ornamented at the hem with tripartite satin leaves connected by rouleaux (March 20, pl. 2139).

Notwithstanding the wide variety of colors, fabrics, and trimmings for evening dresses detailed in Ackermann's fashion columns, the editor invariably summed up the finishing touches as comprising "necklace, earrings, and bracelets, of pearl. Long white kid gloves, white satin shoes."

A white-satin-striped lilac gauze evening dress dating to about 1820 is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2009.300.44); two gauze evening gowns dating to the early 1820s are at the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.679-1913, T.101-1922).

MM





The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics, ser. 3 (1824),
“Morning Dress,” vol. 3 (March), pl. 16 (left); “Evening Dress,” vol. 4 (December), pl. 33
(right), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library





YOUNG GIRL'S DRESS OF CREWEL-EMBROIDERED PIÑA CLOTH

American, ca. 1830–35

YOUNG BOY'S COAT OF REVERSIBLE PRINTED COTTON

American, ca. 1840 (the cotton probably English, ca. 1837–40)

In the first half of the nineteenth century, markers of gentility among the burgeoning middle classes in the United States included an adherence to the notion of separate spheres for men and women and its corollary, a gendered fashionable appearance, both of which were communicated to children from an early age. American and European fashion plates illustrate young boys and girls in scaled-down versions of adult clothing. The silhouettes of this girl's dress with its expansive gigot sleeves, fitted bodice, and full, pleated skirt and this boy's double-breasted coat with its notched collar, slightly raised shoulders, and flared skirts replicate women's and men's fashions from the early 1830s until about 1840. Although equally stylish in their respective shapes, the construction of the two garments reveals differences in dressmaking skills, while the fabrics attest to the availability of hand- and mass-produced foreign textiles in the United States and their use for occasion-specific dress.

Undoubtedly worn for a formal social gathering, the little girl's dress is made of piña cloth, an expensive and much-admired fabric from the Philippines. Spanish colonizers, who arrived in the Philippines in 1521, introduced the pineapple plant—from which piña cloth derives—to the region and by 1571, indigenous peoples were weaving cloth from the fruit's leaf fibers. The late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries represent the apogee of piña cloth production, which was centered in the province of Iloilo on the island of Panay. The time-consuming, labor-intensive processing of the leaves was done by scraping with a shell or broken porcelain, hand stripping, or retting in order to extract the delicate, lustrous threads that were then carefully knotted into lengths; one kilogram of leaves produced only about ten meters of pineapple fiber. Women working on bamboo looms undertook the arduous and exploitative weaving of this fragile cloth; in a government report from April 1857, the British vice-consul in Iloilo stated that wages for this skill in Spanish dollars “usually amounted to from 75 cents to \$1.50 per month,” a small sum. Worn by affluent Filipino men and women throughout the nineteenth century, these diaphanous tunic shirts, blouses, triangular shawls, and veils of primarily white-on-white embroidered piña cloth served as signifiers of wealth, status, and taste. Prices for these garments and accessories varied depending on the quality of the fabric, but the most expensive items cost upward of a thousand dollars.

Although piña cloth was exported to the West in the nineteenth century, the fabric used for this dress that is associated with the coastal town of Hampden, Maine, was likely acquired directly by a U.S. seaman who traveled to the Philippines, probably en route to China. In her 1997 article, “Dress as Souvenir: Piña Cloth in the Nineteenth Century,” Linda Welters observes that “fabrics and garments made of pineapple fiber came to New England as gifts and souvenirs, not as trade goods” and that “captains, captains' wives, and sailors found piña cloth an ideal memento of a voyage to the East because of its beauty, rarity, and exotic origins.” The pineapple itself was a symbol of friendship and hospitality in early nineteenth-century America, and the fruit was used as a decorative motif in architecture and interiors as well as on silver, furniture, and ceramics.

Made by a skilled seamstress who was up to the task of stitching this sheer fabric, the dress features an unusual crisscrossed, pleated bodice creating a V-neckline at the front and back, not unlike the woman's gauze evening gown of about 1823 (see pp. 12–15). Accentuating the neckline, waist, fitted cuffs, and full skirt are stylized floral-and-foliage trails in deep red, pale pink, blue, and dark-and-light olive green; worked with crewel threads in satin and stem stitches, the execution of the embroidery is distinctly American. The vogue for white dresses with similar, and similarly placed, embroidery among young women and young girls appears in two watercolors by Cecil Elizabeth Drummond, dated 1828–30 and 1829, in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (respectively E.2077-1938 and E.2069-1938). In the drawing depicting two young girls, the standing child also wears matching pantalettes embroidered around the calf and flat, blue slippers laced over the ankle. Pantalettes may well have accompanied this dress; an embroidered piña cloth dress and pantalettes dating to about 1844 are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (06.701.1). Although genteel comportment was also expected of young children in the nineteenth century, careful darning on the dress's proper right sleeve near the wrist is a trace of the potential—and not uncommon—mishaps that occur even at times of best behavior.

In contrast to the painstakingly hand-produced piña cloth, the roller-printed cotton used for the young boy's coat reflects the increasing mechanization, as well as the sophistication, of the printed-cotton textile







industries in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although printing firms in New England and other East Coast centers flourished during the period, this cotton is likely English. Introduced in Britain in the late eighteenth century, engraved copper rollers significantly sped up the production of printed cottons over the much-slower technique of hand-block printing and reduced the prices of these goods that became more widely accessible to a growing number of consumers. In this coat, the mottled brown pattern that appears on both the exterior and interior was produced by pushing the color through in order to create a reversible fabric intended to resemble “gambroons,” cotton-and-worsted wool textiles that were woven with yarns of different colors spun together. A pattern book in the G. P. & J. Baker archive titled “Gambroons 1838 & 9” contains a page with swatches of these printed imitations that were manufactured at the Swaisland Printworks in Crayford, Kent (Inv. 077, p. 8). A swatch dating to about 1835 in a slightly earlier Swaisland pattern book is also similar to the coat’s variegated cotton (Inv. 04, p. 20). These fabrics were exported to both North and South America. The blue windowpane check pattern on the coat’s exterior was added subsequently by a job printer, possibly in the United States. Unlike the fine sewing of the little girl’s dress, the coat is more roughly constructed with the interior seams left unfinished, suggesting it may have been made at home, while its sturdy cotton fabric reflects its use for informal wear, rather than for a highly special occasion.

The survival of both of these children’s garments—the rare and the mundane—manifests the deep emotional attachments that linger in these objects for the adult parents or other relatives who preserved them long after they were worn.

MM



PAIR OF PAINTED-AND-DYED PALAMPORES

Indian (Coromandel Coast) for the European market, ca. 1790

The East–West cross-cultural exchange in design elements that appears on decorative arts of various types, and over many centuries, can readily be seen on Indian painted-and-dyed palampores from the eighteenth century that were manufactured in India for sale in the West. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the British, Dutch, and French East India Companies came to see Indian painted-and-dyed cloths as a desirable commodity.

Correspondences regarding the designs ensued, with the British East India Company writing, in 1643, the first known example of design directions coming from London to parties in India: “Those which hereafter you shall send we desire may be with more white ground, and the flowers and branch to be in colours in the middle of the quilt as the painter pleases, whereas now most part of your quilts come with sad red grounds which are not equally sorted to please all buyers.” As consumers in England, France, and the Netherlands acquired a taste for these brightly colored and highly decorative textiles from India, notwithstanding various laws enacted to prevent their import, the cultural exchange, guided by the demands of the different marketplaces, influenced the look of the large Indian panels that came to be known as palampores.

This pair of palampores, with their airy quality, reflects the culmination of design influences in the final decades of the eighteenth century when there was still a demand for Indian painted-and-dyed cloths, while concurrently fashions in fabrics for both furnishings and clothing were shifting to a neoclassical style. While silks were typically used for bed hangings, wall coverings, and curtains in formal rooms, cottons from the East, as well as those produced in Britain and France, were popular for less formal rooms such as bedrooms and studies. Palampores of this beauty and quality would have provided a touch of the eighteenth century’s ongoing affair with exoticism. This pair, from a suite of Indian cloths used as wall coverings, presents a central bifurcated flowering tree, along with two trees climbing up the sides that gracefully arch and almost meet along the top edge, providing a sense of fluidity. With their central cornucopias and garland borders, design elements from the West associated with European decorative arts of the second half of the eighteenth century, the palampores utilize the masterly techniques of the Indian dyers and printers to enhance delicate flowers, leaves, and limbs that flow from the cornucopias and create lush garlands.

The cornucopia, with its connotation of abundance, is a recurring and fitting symbol to appear on Indian painted-and-dyed palampores made for the Western market. The cornucopia traces back to Greek mythology, representing the horn of a goat endowed with magical properties that Zeus drank from as an infant: it would replenish itself with food and drink. The word *cornucopia*, which first appeared in English in the early sixteenth century, derives from Latin meaning “horn of plenty.” As with these palampores, cornucopias often appear on Indian export textiles. A fragment of Indian painted-and-dyed yardage, in the collection of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum features an all-over pattern of latticework with cornucopias (1952-118-1). A palampore, dated 1750–75, in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, displays numerous cornucopia: its center field contains a cornucopia in the middle as well as larger cornucopia at each corner (IS.40-1950).

The garland border that frames these palampores is a Western feature that is seen often on Indian export textiles of the eighteenth century. While most palampores with this decorative motif are dated to the latter half of the century, with the design becoming popular in the middle of the century, the Victoria & Albert Museum holds an example of an earlier palampore with a garland border: its central Tree of Life dates the textile to circa 1725 to 1750 (IS.136-1950). While garland borders can be seen on numerous extant examples, the border on these palampores is exceptional in its delicacy and detail, its shaded blue ribbon forming concise bows, with ends that gracefully ripple to the sides. The ribbon motifs on an Indian painted-and-dyed-cotton chair seat in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum are similar in design (IS.205-1959).

The merging of Indian textile-producing techniques with European design sensibilities resulted in luxurious palampores such as these where the classic Tree of Life frames Zeus’s cornucopia, and the Indian abundance and variety of exotic florals appear in the midst of the delicacy often noted in late eighteenth-century European decorative arts.

100 x 80 in. each

DG







ROBE À LA PIÉMONTAISE

French (the silk probably Chinese), ca. 1775–80

In September 1775, the fifteen-year-old sister of the newly crowned King Louis XVI made a brief stop in the bustling commercial city of Lyon on her way to Turin, capital of the Kingdom of Sardinia, where her new husband awaited her. About ten days before, Marie Clotilde of France had married Charles Emmanuel, Prince of Piedmont, in what was to be the last royal marriage by proxy at Versailles before the Revolution. Although she would have preferred to become a nun, the eldest sister of Louis XVI accepted the diplomatic union docilely, as had her two other brothers, both of whom were already married to her new husband's sisters.

Marie Clotilde stayed in Lyon for only three days but made a great impact on the populace, touring its principal factories, hearing poetry praising her beauty and grace, and, to her everlasting credit, pleading successfully for the release of six imprisoned deserters.

The future Queen of Sardinia had also made a brief, but consequential, impact on *la mode* during her stay. Three years later, the *Gallerie des modes et costumes français* described the birth of the type of dress, calling it the “Costume à la Piémontoise,” which “had its origin at the theatre of Lyon during the sojourn of Her Royal Highness Madame Clotilde of France, Princess of Piedmont, in 1775.” It is unclear whether such a gown was worn by Marie Clotilde herself or by another woman to the theater—either an attendee or an actress on its stage—and subsequently admired, or even adopted, by the princess. It is also possible that the style was simply popular in the city at the time of the princess's visit, and was so dubbed in her honor. From contemporary reports, it does not appear that she had time to visit the theater, lending weight to the latter conclusion. Whatever the case, the princess was indelibly associated with this type of garment. Further text clarified the cut and style of the *robe à la piémontoise*:

These robes have pleats at the back, like the *robes à la Française*; but these pleats are applied after cutting, like the skirts of the robe, & form a type of mantle (*manteau*), which attaches at the back, at the top of the neck; this *manteau* is left to hang: sometimes the Ladies wrap their bodies in it, or raise it up under the arms with much grace.

This dress is a rare surviving example of this form, an idiosyncratic mediation between the body-conscious *robe à l'anglaise*, which adhered closely to the wearer's back, and the fluid *robe à la française*, with its deep box pleats falling from the rear shoulders to the ground. As the *Gallerie* described, the shoulder pleats of this *manteau* are cut-in-one with the skirt panels at the center back but bridge the spine over the separately cut bodice, in this case styled with a false cutaway front like a *robe à la polonoise*, with a tabbed *gilet* concealing the center front lacing closure. Made of lightweight warp-patterned taffeta, the gown can be *retroussé* over the hips like the *polonoise*, creating the rounded, meringue-like silhouette of the late 1770s and 1780s. Multicolored fly fringe and pink gimp trimming at the neck and along the self-fabric robings, elaborately tucked and padded with wool wadding, enhance the confectionary effect.

The *piémontoise* represents a final step in the century-long evolution of what later came to be known as the “plis Watteau,” which gradually narrowed until they were subsumed into the back to create the *anglaise*. Here, the pleats reemerge but have become detached from the torso, turning an element of structure into one of ornament, an abstraction of the defining feature of French dress in this period. The Watteau pleat of what the curator Richard Martin called the “ceaseless” eighteenth century has been revived countless times since, notably in the artistic dress of the late nineteenth century, which treated the pleats much in the same way as in the *piémontoise*.

Marie Clotilde's association with this form of dress is also significant because of her well-known physical appearance. Like her brother the king, she was notoriously overweight for the time, garnering the mocking sobriquet “Gros Madame” at court. If she did adopt this style, it might have been because of its peculiar combination of tailoring and drape, revealing the sensuous curvature of the back from some angles, while at the same time maintaining the elegant formality of the shoulder pleats. As such, the *piémontoise* may represent one of the first examples of specifically plus-sized fashion. This dress's ample proportions testify to the *piémontoise*'s adoption by full-figured women.



Beyond diplomatic unions, the textile from which this dress is made reveals a further layer of international exchange. Measuring twenty-eight inches wide, and with distinctive perforated selvedges, the taffeta with *canalé* stripes and sprigged bands—known as a *tobine* in English—is almost certainly a silk made in China for export, mimicking contemporary French taffetas called *mexicaines*. The mantua maker skillfully aligned the stripes throughout the dress to enhance their graphic impact and verticality. This attention to detail is particularly visible on the pleats themselves, which are, unusually, fully lined with sized linen to support the delicate silk, ensuring that the precise placement of the stripes is preserved. Probably recut from a *robe à la française* shortly after it was made, the dress is remarkably fresh and probably received very little wear, with several fragile basting threads still visible on the interior.

Few *robes à la piémontaise* survive. Other examples are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (C.I.61.11); the Victoria & Albert Museum (750-1898 and T.725-1913); the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (96/65.1-2 and 96/70.1-2); the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (621b/1939); the Museo San Telmo, San Sebastián (E-002195); the Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil, Terrassa (7250 and 11957); and the Museum of Costume and Fashion, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

WDG



EMBROIDERED SLAP-SOLE MULE

English, ca. 1650–70

Dainty and decidedly feminine, this sapphire-blue silk velvet slap-sole mule, richly embroidered with silver-wrapped threads, was surely worn by a “Lady of Quality.” Introduced in the early seventeenth century, “goloshes,” flat-soled backless overshoes with toecaps that prevented men’s boot heels from sinking into the ground, were soon adopted by women as stylish, as well as functional, footwear. Like goloshes, slap-sole shoes and mules, or “slippers” as they were referred to later in the century, were made with the separate sole attached under the ball of the foot, leaving the unattached heel to slap up and down as the wearer walked. In *The Academy of Armory, or, a storehouse of armory and blazon* (1688), Randle Holme identifies: “Several sorts of Shooes,” including “Slap shooes, or Ladies shooes, [that] are shooes with a loose Sole.”

Intended for indoor use, mules were often luxurious, and the addition of a slap sole was an impractical point of fashion. In this rare surviving example, a stylized flower enclosed within serpentine tendrils terminating in florals with scrolls almost covers the vamp. The narrow, square toe suggests a date of about 1650 to 1670; by the 1680s, toes were sharply pointed. The embroidery, along with the shape of the toe and high heel, resembles those on a mule worn by Queen Henrietta Maria (1609–1669), dated 1660 to 1665, in the Museum of London. Here, the vamp is lined in white leather and the brown leather insole is tooled in a diamond trellis pattern. Two pieces of white kid drawn taught over the three-inch shaped heel are stitched at the center back with heavy beige thread and white kid covers the top of the slap sole. A leather rand, or “rann” in Holme’s *Armory*, “holds the Vamp to the Soles.”

The raised-work silver-metallic motifs that stand out against the deep-blue velvet ground—evocative of the nighttime sky—would have glistened provocatively in candlelight, underscoring the eroticism of the female foot. The verses accompanying Abraham Bosse’s engraving *Le Cordonnier*, dating about 1632 to 1633 and illustrating a woman being fitted for a shoe with her stockinged foot resting on the kneeling shoemaker’s thigh, are overtly sexual. Other paintings and prints of shoemakers at work depict these male artisans in simple interiors surrounded by their implements and materials. Although published a century later than the date of this mule, François Alexandre Pierre de Garsault’s *Art du Cordonnier* (1767) enumerates the many types of leather, wood, and animal-gut sewing threads used by the shoemaker and illustrates his table, leathers, and iron equipment, including large scissors, hammers, awls, and nails.

Favored by elite elegant women, slap soles were also associated with both slovenly housewives and real and fictional circumspect women. In 1642, the satirical pamphlet *St. Hillaries Teares Shed upon All Professions* mocked the “Doves of Venus,” formerly arrayed in “Velvets, Sattins, and Taffaties,” reduced to going to “the Chandlers and herbe-wives in slip-shooes, for Cheese and Onions to dinner.” *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled*, published in 1673, recounts the life of Mary Carleton, self-styled as a German princess, a notorious bigamist and con woman, and describes her appearance during her trial at the Old Bailey wearing “an *Indian* strip’d Gown, silk Petticoat, [and] white shooes with slaps, laced with green.” In 1683, *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*, “written by a Person of Quality of the Female Sex,” decried “what a pleasant comfort a man has of a wife that wallows about the house in her slip-shooes and her Linen smelling like sowre Milk” and the sound of a “Lady . . . gracefully beating the stairs as she descended step by step with her musical *flap, flaps*.” A broadsheet published in 1677 by Mr. Croome, proprietor of a London establishment named “The Shoo and Slap,” humorously attests to the popularity of this discordant footwear.

A mid-seventeenth-century, ivory silk slap-sole mule trimmed with bobbin lace is in the collection of the Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury. Slap-sole shoes are in the collections of the Bata Shoe Museum (P02.193AB); Ham House and Garden (HH 519-1948); the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (44.506a-b and 44.521a-b); the Museum of London (A7003); the National Museums of Scotland (K.2002.1030 AB); and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (inv. Louvre Lab. 1161); among other institutions. A pair of blue velvet shoes embroidered with silver-gilt thread, with similarly shaped toes, dating to about 1660, reputedly worn by Lady Mary Stanhope, is at the Northampton Museums and Art Gallery.

Provenance: Ex. collection George and Margaret Watts

8½ in. long

MM



EMBROIDERED WOOL COURT SUIT

Probably French, ca. 1806–14

The reintroduction of court rituals following Napoleon's self-declarations as first consul in 1799 and emperor in 1804 brought the need to regulate formal attire once again. While ladies' court dress retained the comparative freedom of the neoclassical silhouette, the more casual and eccentric menswear of the 1790s was succeeded by a hierarchical, militaristic style where position and social class were easily legible. Napoleon solidified this vestimentary campaign with coronation and ceremonial garments, color coded according to rank, designed by Jean-Baptiste Isabey with embroidery in silver and gold by Augustin-François-André Picot. This sartorial system, along with a more familiar form, the *habit à la française* consisting of formal coat, breeches, and waistcoat worn during the eighteenth century, also informed the court garments of gentlemen without noble or official titles. The present court suit of black wool broadcloth, embroidered with silver-wrapped silk thread and spangles *à la disposition*, is a rare survival of the Napoleonic reinterpretation of a symbol of ancien régime pomp.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, the male silhouette became increasingly fitted through the trunk, legs, and sleeves, showcasing the athletic male body at a time of war and upheaval in France. The narrow cut of the back and heightened, reinforced collar of this coat are hallmarks of the slender look favored in the early days of the Empire, and the pronounced curved cutaway of the coat front is seen on other suits of about the same date. The body and sleeves are lined in a fine ivory, twilled silk, with reinforcements in the coat pockets and breeches in linen and cotton. A *gilet*, probably of white silk with a similarly high collar and matching embroidery, would have completed the look, along with the requisite trappings of court functions. "No more boots, sabres, or cockades," wrote the statesman André François Miot de Méliot in his *Memoirs* (1858). "These were replaced by tights and silk stockings, buckled-shoes, dress-swords, and hats held under the arm." A plate in the *Journal des dames et des modes* of March 16, 1803, depicts a gentleman in full dress, with *habit*, jabot, cravat, *chapeau bras*, sword, clocked white stockings, powdered *crépé* (crimped, short hair), and wig bag; his ice-blue suit is richly embellished with silver embroidery (see p. 33).

Napoleon's adoption of the *habit à la française* at his court demonstrated the extension of his political and economic acumen to matters of fashion. In the midst of constant war with other European powers and especially tense conflict with Great Britain, this simultaneously old and new fashion had the dual effect of redirecting tastes away from the Anglomania that had held since the 1760s and legitimizing the new emperor's reign through dress. Most important of all, establishing such court dress facilitated wide-scale investment in the much-diminished and struggling Lyonnais silk industry and provided jobs for France's professional embroiderers. In fact, under Napoleon the demand for embroiderers in Paris was so great that those working in Lyon were sent to the capital to fulfill orders.

In keeping with the new styles and demand for work under the emperor, embroiderers increased both the scale and surface area of needlework, often nearly covering a coat's entire front and tails, as well as the sleeves for garments worn by high-ranking officials, some of whom were said to wear more gold than was contained in their pocketbooks. Although the suit's embroidery does not correspond to the 1804 imperial decree regulating official costume, the wearer undoubtedly followed the same protocol and level of attention to appearance as those in the emperor's household and entourage. Found in the United States, the present suit may have been commissioned in France by an American at the French court or one of the satellite courts throughout Europe. Writing from Paris in July 1804, Robert J. Livingston, minister to France, apprised James Madison, then secretary of state, of the necessary outlays for presentation:

It will be proper to bear in mind that the new court which was before sufficiently expensive will exact new and very great expences in dress equipage &c. . . . and what will appear more extraordinary all these trifles occupy the attention of the man who almost governs Europe.

The expanses of glistening florals decorating the front and tails of this coat, rendered with purl, spangles, and embossed studs, were certainly the work of an accomplished professional embroiderer following the latest French styles. To create each flower, the maker layered spangles of varying sizes in concentric circles over a central embossed roundel, enhanced with groupings of bullion stitches; these motifs are carried over





to the pointed-petal flowers on the self-fabric buttons. Feathery stalks resembling hare's-tail are worked in a variation of fishbone stitch and florals stem are executed using the s-ing technique, where purl is worked backward to create the surface effect of a continuous three-dimensional helix. A serpentine vine with purl, bullion, and satin-stitched leaves and spangles along the knee bands and florals on the tiny buttons coordinate the fall-front breeches to the coat. The *Journal de Paris* of March 1, 1806, records the mode among gentlemen for this type of silver embroidery on a dark wool, rather than light silk, ground: "Among the embroideries which distinguish the new full dress for both men and women, one notices the eyes of Argos & peacock tails, silver & *paillettes* on a brown ground: embroidered for men on *drap*." This style was favored until the end of Napoleon's reign. An anonymous portrait of Lazare Nicolas Marguerite, Count Carnot, painted in 1815 during the Hundred Days when he served as Minister of the Interior, depicts him wearing a similar black suit, resplendent with silver embroidery (Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, MV 6460).

Civilian *habits à la française* of wool broadcloth such as this one are scarcer than those of silk, probably owing to the tendency toward insect damage. A comparable French suit of black wool with silver and silk embroidery of about the same date is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (C.I.48.14.3). A ca. 1800 red wool court coat and matching *gilet* with metallic embroidery, of Italian origin, are at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.80.60a-b).

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"Grande Parure," *Journal des dames et des modes, Costume Parisien* (March 16, 1803), pl. 456. Bunka Gakuen University Library Digital Archive of Rare Materials

WHITEWORK LINEN COIF

English, ca. 1620

During the medieval and early modern periods, people of all social classes wore head coverings in the form of a close-fitting cap, called a coif, for warmth and protection both indoors and out. By the end of the sixteenth century, coifs had fallen out of fashion for men but continued to be worn by women through the mid-seventeenth century. Working-class women wore examples of plain linen, but ladies of wealth donned highly ornamented ones, often embroidered and beaded and with a forehead cloth. Examples such as the present coif provided women with not only a hygienic layer between hair and hat but also with a token of modesty; hair was typically plaited and secured closely to the head, ensuring that the coif would conceal all underneath.

Primarily worked in double blanket stitch, this coif is embroidered with a composition of rose hips and holly leaves inside a pattern of scrolling stems, motifs that are typical of domestic and professional embroidery in England from the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Intricate cut- and drawnwork, involving the cutting or displacement of the ground fabric, create the lacy geometric filler patterns of the holly leaves. Rather



than trimming the linen to form, the amateur maker has folded and sewed under the bottom corners with the embroidery passed through both layers, creating a slightly stiffened shape around the chin. The coif is finished with scalloped bobbin lace mimicking the infill starburst patterns of the cut- and drawnwork, and the lower edge has a row of loops worked in buttonhole stitch for a linen drawstring.

Appreciated for millennia for their medicinal and culinary properties, rose hips, the fruit which grows on the rose plant, also symbolized fecundity and fertility. They were an integral part of the Tudor garden and cuisine and would have been harvested in late autumn or early winter to be used in drinks and jellies for tarts and other delights. Holly leaves were traditionally an auspicious and apotropaic symbol at Christmastime and, in the pre-Christian world, on the winter solstice. As late as the nineteenth century, townspeople in rural Cumbria walked in a procession with holly branches on Twelfth Night, also called Holly Night, to conclude the season's festivities with tidings of good fortune. In Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1623), the character Amiens sings the famous lament, "Blow, blow thou winter wind," in which holly leaves alone foretell of

vernal hope that will end a bitterly cold winter, unlike humanity's endless cycles of betrayal and pain. The mingling of holly with rose hips here might signify the wearer's hope for prosperity and well-being in the new year and upcoming spring season.

A similar coif embroidered on a drawnwork ground is in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (1929.632). Other related examples include those at the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.98-1925, T.69-1938, and T.57-1947) and in the Micheál and Elizabeth Feller collection; see Mary M. Brooks et al., *Micheál & Elizabeth Feller: The Needlework Collection*, vol. 1 (2011, p. 109, no. F476).

Provenance: Ex. collection The Rev. Sir Thomas Combe Miller, 6th Baronet (1781–1864), and Lady Martha Combe Miller (née Holmes, d. 1877) of Froyle, Hampshire, U.K.

MDA





PAIR OF CREWELWORK CURTAINS

English, ca. 1720

With the vogue for Indian chintzes and silk-embroidered cottons in late seventeenth-century England came the desire to mimic those designs on locally made wares. Imported textiles such as those found at Ashburnham Place, Sussex, fueled a domestic market for compositions including the present one, with thin, repeating trunks extending upward in a serpentine curve, executed not in silk but in wool. In keeping with the cool, damp northern climate, professional pattern drawers and amateur embroiderers transposed Indian motifs, particularly the Tree of Life and exotic flora, onto the recognizable and necessary British mainstay of bed hangings. By the time of the reign of William and Mary (r. 1689–1702), the vibrancy and dynamism of Indian-inspired imagery, which was often indiscriminately confused with Chinese and Japanese motifs, replaced the monochromatic, static renderings of the earlier seventeenth century, while keeping the latter's needleworking techniques alive.

While late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century crewelwork is known for its domestic charm, this pair of wool-embroidered curtains is singular for the mixture of especially naive forms heavily ornamented with complex and masterful couching, laid work, and trellis stitch, among other techniques. The comparatively simple, amoebic contours of florals, foliage, serpentine vines, and smooth Chinese scholar's rocks serve as tabulae rasae on which the needlewoman could express her creativity and demonstrate her stitchwork. The maker of these curtains composed the fillings using at least twenty-seven different patterns in nearly as many color combinations. Some, such as the couched double-cross-stitch stars, buttonhole curlicues, and straight- and fly-stitch leaf veins, are rendered free-form; others contain geometric grids in up to five colors. Patterns and color schemes change within single shapes worked over the seams of the four widths of the twilled fustian ground. Elsewhere, the embroiderer utilized a spectrum of worsteds in stitches including satin, stem, seed, outline, herringbone, and French knots.

If not for the vivacious filler patterns, the curtain's arrangement and relative sparseness—with swathes of the fustian ground left plain—might point to a New England origin. Intricate laid work was, however, a phenomenon distinct to Great Britain and rarely seen in the colonies. The origins of these complicated needleworked patterns can be found in the diminutively sized black- and redwork executed in silk on late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century garments and accessories. Although such complicated laid work is rarer in large-scale crewel embroideries, aprons worked in silk of the same period use similar designs, including one example now in the collection of Colonial Williamsburg (1991-505, gift of Cora Ginsburg).

By the early twentieth century, this type of English crewelwork—or Jacobean work, as it was sometimes called—experienced a revival, leading to the destruction of many antique pieces. Collectors of Stuart and Georgian arts sought out crewel hangings to complete interiors, marking a trend for cutting embroidery away from old, damaged ground fabrics and reapplying it. The discovery of these curtains only in the 1980s meant that they were saved from what would have been a certain fate of period-room reuse, a fashion that, by the 1920s, also spurred the trend for printed reproductions of crewelwork in Europe and the United States. In 1926, a writer in *Good Furniture and Decoration* noted that there was “more interest than usual in Jacobean designs, and especially those which represent something approaching crewelwork, whether in weaving or printing.”

Twentieth-century designers such as Josef Frank also readily absorbed and reinterpreted English crewel compositions for printed textiles. Frank would have embraced the unexpectedly modern eclecticism of the “primitive” motifs on these curtains, which could have easily served as inspiration for textiles produced by the Wiener Werkstätte or Paul Poiret's Atelier Martine as well. While in the seventeenth century, the curtains would have softened the lines of an imposing oak tester bed, they would have been just at home in a sleek 1920s interior, a refreshing palate cleanser of handwork amid steel and light woods.

83³/₄ x 67 in. each

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Front inside cover: detail of coverlet, p. 6
Back inside cover: detail of young boy's coat, p. 17

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