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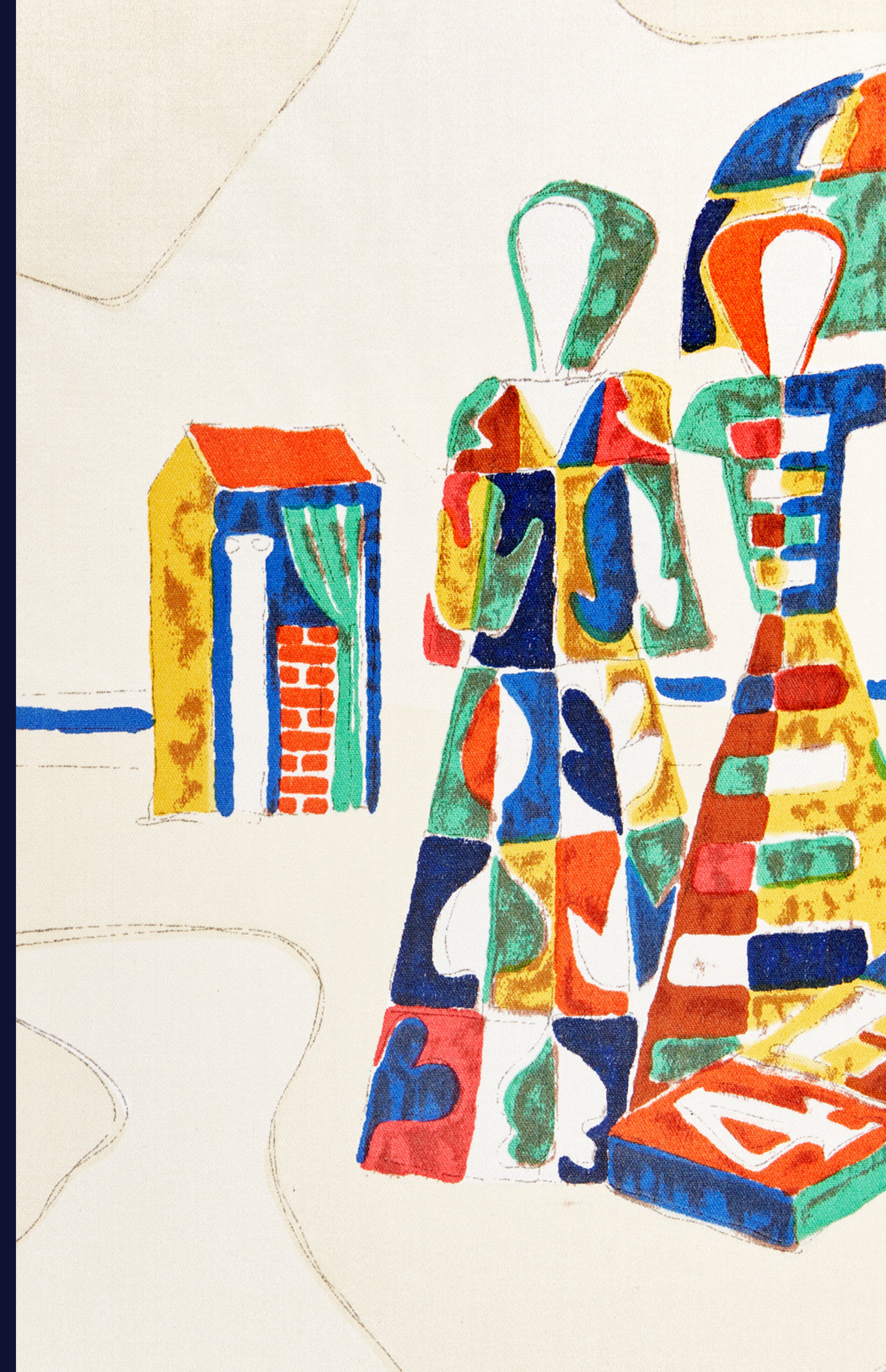

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CORA GINSBURG LLC

WINTER 2022
A Catalogue
of 16th to 20th century
costume textiles & needlework

by appointment

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PAIR OF EMBROIDERED SILK APPARELS

Probably Central Italian, ca. 1550–1600

Gold, silver, and a vibrant mannerist palette of pastels and jewel tones illuminate this pair of embroideries depicting the Evangelists Matthew and Luke. Each one originally formed the center front or back panel, called an "apparel," on a dalmatic, the tunic-like garment worn as part of the Roman Catholic liturgy. Presumably a second dalmatic would have featured two matching embroideries depicting the other Evangelists, Mark and John.

Apparels of this type, showing saints and biblical scenes, were produced in professional workshops throughout the Italian peninsula. The present pair would have been executed by a variety of hands in the same workshop, with each artisan specializing in a separate compositional element: backgrounds, strapwork frames, shading on clothing, and—most importantly—figures. For the backgrounds, the embroiderer laid gold-wrapped silk threads in parallel rows, over which are stitched vertical lines of gradating colored silks from pale yellow in the foreground to deepest blue in the far reaches of the sky. The hues recall those in the landscapes of contemporary Italian portraiture, which—inspired by Flemish and Netherlandish examples—use color temperature to signify distance from the sitter. The saints' garments are worked in warm tints, complementing the landscapes behind. In the surrounding strapwork frame of couched metallic threads, gold alternates with blue, green, and yellow silks to create tonal variations in the scrolling architectural and acanthine shapes.

The saints' faces and windswept hair have been enlivened with the finest painterly skill on a minute scale of mere millimeters: both figures have deeply furrowed brows, sunken cheeks, and wrinkled under eyes. Saint Matthew stares, somewhat worriedly, to his right, guided by the angel who points in that direction. While Luke's symbolic ox is pushed to the edge of the roundel and its characteristic wings are completely out of sight, the saint himself, on the other hand, looks directly at us, the slightest hint of a Mona Lisa smile across his lips.

Both saints are shown *di spalla* (from *ritratto di spalla*, literally "portrait of the back"), an early sixteenth-century Leonardesque pictorial trope wherein the sitter is simultaneously turned toward and away from the viewer as if having been caught by surprise "from behind" (*di spalle* in modern Italian). In this case, we encounter each Evangelist in the act of penning his Gospel, with a writing instrument of silver-wrapped silk threads in his right hand and the left supporting the gleaming golden scroll. The focus on the right side of the body, ensconced in billowing fabric, and, especially, on the writing hand could be inspired by Raphael's portrayal of Pythagoras in the *School of Athens* fresco executed between 1509 and 1511 in the Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican Museums. Agostino Veneziano's 1523 etching of the Greek philosopher and surrounding figures confirms that this specific passage gained a wider audience outside of the Vatican. Raphael's representation of Pythagoras also became directly associated with Matthew after Giorgio Vasari erroneously identified him as such in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550).

This pair of embroideries was formerly dated to the 1520s and attributed to the Florentine workshop responsible for the famous vestments of Cardinal Passerini, now at the Museo Diocesano di Cortona and previously thought to have been designed by Raphael himself (see Frederick G. Schab, "Quattro tessuti ricamati del Rinascimento italiano nel New Hampshire," *Accademia Raffaello. Atti e Studi* 2 (2005): 35–44). Stylistic and technical analysis, however, puts their production in the second half of the sixteenth century, as indicated by the exaggerated *manierismo* of the saints' bodies, with their bulging muscles and fluid contours as well as the exuberant strapwork. Tuscany is likewise a possible place of manufacture, although related evangelistic iconography is also seen elsewhere in central Italy.

Although the ultimate sources for these saintly portrayals can only be speculative, their wonderfully animated expressions and interactive gazes that effectively break the fourth wall set these apparels apart from other surviving examples. Their workmanship and individuality suggest that they were once part of an important *parato* or suite of ecclesiastical vestments, the early history of which remains, for the moment, unknown.

Provenance: Ex collection Charles P. Berolzheimer (1902–1995), New York; John and Lois Yopp, New Hampshire.

18 x 21 ¾ in. each

MDA

EMBROIDERED SILK AND COTTON BEDCOVER

English, second quarter of the 18th century

Several generations of artistic exchange and appropriation are embedded in this cover, made to adorn a stately English bed sometime in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. It directly emulates Indian embroideries created in the Deccan at around the same time, which were used as floorspreads or summer carpets by local sultanates as well as being exported to Europe as avidly sought luxury goods. The format—with a central lobed medallion and similar quartered medallions in the corners—ultimately derives from sixteenth-century Safavid manuscript illuminations and bindings (in the style called "Lechek Torūnj") that incorporated Chinese motifs introduced previously by Timurid and Turkoman artists. This style inspired carpet designs produced for the Persian court, which then influenced the design of painted calico palampores and embroideries produced by the Mughals, and finally European imitations like this counterpane or bedcover. Its most notable characteristic, however, is the striking affinity of the floral elements to Mughal flower painting, which itself was the result of a mutually ravenous appetite for cultural interchange between the Agra sultans and European traders.

Beginning with Akbar (r. 1556–1605), the Mughal rulers eagerly sought artistic inspiration from engraved European sources, first from the Portuguese, who were established in India from the early sixteenth century, and later the Dutch and English. They demonstrated their connoisseurship by creating magnificent *muraqqas*, albums containing Islamic miniatures, calligraphy, and sometimes even European prints. While it has long been recognized that the illustrations in some of the most celebrated of these, such as the Gulshan Album compiled ca. 1600 for Jahangir (Golestan Palace Library, Tehran), contained images copied from European engravings, until recently, the flower studies in these works have been thought to be purely native observations after nature. In fact, as J. P. Losty has proven, many reproduce motifs, if not whole plates, from European herbals and florilegia, including Adriaen Collaert's *Florilegium* (Antwerp, ca. 1589).

On a ground of imported Indian cotton, the English maker of this piece embroidered stylized flowers that may have been adapted from painted chintzes, which appear to have gone through various cycles of (re) interpretation. The central and corner medallions are not strictly defined but rather dissolve into a mélange of red and white flowers and curling leaves that seem to be swayed by a gentle breeze. For the most part, the flowers are not botanically identifiable, appearing instead to be an imaginative synthesis of carnation and rose. In particular, the serpentine plants issuing from grassy mounds that grow toward the center from the main border—with their shaded petals and large heart-shaped leaves—are dramatically similar to the drawing of a pink rose on a sheet from the *muraqqa* compiled by Emperor Shah Jahan's eldest son in the 1630s (British Library, Add.Or.3129, f.67v). The manner in which the blossoms are shown from the back, as well as the presence of flowers in various stages of development, ultimately points to an origin in a European herbal, where the goal was to document plants from all angles for scientific purposes. That European source was probably adapted by Indian artisans for a chintz or embroidery in the late seventeenth century, before, in turn, inspiring this English copy.

This piece may be compared with a floor spread attributed to the Deccan in the Victoria & Albert Museum (IM 2-1912). It shares with the present cover a limited palette based on reds and greens and is executed primarily in satin stitch. The English embroiderer worked in a similar technique on this piece, creating the illusion of three dimensionality in the flowers by imbricating several shades of silk in bands, from rose pink to deep red, with ivory and browns for contrast. The leaves are done in a comparable manner, with decorative stem-stitch veins embroidered on top. Large areas of solid color, such as the grassy mounds, were formed by couching laid silk yarns to the cotton ground, as are the metallic—silver-gilt wound around a yellow silk core—threads. Wild yellow tussar silk was used to create the background pattern of interlacing concentric quatrefoils, executed in backstitch, forming a false-quilted surface that is an echo of the earliest Indian bedcovers to reach England, the dense pictorial *colchas* of Bengal. The entire pattern was hand drawn onto the cotton base in ink, much of which is still visible in areas not covered entirely by embroidery.

Covers like these were often accompanied by sets of bedcurtains and pillow covers embroidered to match, creating a spectacularly exotic display in the "Indian rooms" popular in England in the mid-eighteenth century. Similar English bedcovers evoking Indian originals can be found in the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.144-1961); the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1970.173); and Belton House (NT 436909).

74 x 68 in.

WDG

EMBROIDERED SILK COLLAR AND MITTS

Northern Italian, ca. 1725–50

This set of collar and matching mitts of plush black velvet and vibrant saffron-yellow silk embodies the notion, articulated by the politician Antonio Fradeletto in 1896, that "as for its fashions and its manners, the eighteenth century in Italy is French, just as the sixteenth century in France was Italian." Inspired by fashions from the French court, they nonetheless reflect an idiosyncratic *italianità* derived from Italy's unique patchwork of regional dress styles. This singular regionality created a fashion system that was rich and multidimensional. The ensemble also builds additional layers onto this story for the possible connections to Carnevale, where fanciful dress played an integral role in the ludic festivities.

Collars like this one—closing at the neck and covering the décolleté, ensuring warmth and modesty—were distinctive in northern Italian dress. An anonymous Torinese watercolor from about 1775, in an album now at the Bunka Gakuen Library (BB00124631), shows a lady with a similar black silk collar and coordinating hat. In 1735-40, Fra Galgario painted the Bergamese noblewoman Bertrama Daina de' Valsecchi wearing a comparable black velvet collar with silver embroidery and matched mitts, probably edged with silver bobbin lace.

Short wrist-length mitts, with the top of the hand open leaving the fingers free, were favored in Northern Europe from the late seventeenth century. Called *mitene* (from the French *mitaines*) or *mezzi guanti* (literally "half gloves") during the eighteenth century and *manizze* or *maniccie* in earlier sources, mitts are frequently seen in Italian painting. Eighteenth-century Venetian inventories reveal that some of the wealthiest ladies owned upward of fifty to seventy pairs of gloves and mitts.

Like their fingered counterparts, mitts could be given as tokens of love, betrothal, and sexual interest and had amorous connotations. In a satirical poem dedicated to an unnamed "Signora," written in the 1690s but published posthumously in 1757, the Venetian poet Bartolomeo Dotti poked fun at suitors and *cicisbei* (male escorts) who clamored for a chance to hold her belongings, including her mitts, and thus feel closer to God: "Come se fosser calici, e patene / Or la ventola vostra, or le mitene" (As if they were chalices, and patens / Now your fan, now your mittens).

On the collar's velvet, paper-padded embroidery of silver-wrapped silk threads—a characteristically Italian technique used into the twentieth century—creates a continuous rococo flowering vine, embroidered to form, symmetrical, and ending in cartouches with couched lattices of silver *filé*. The mitts are likewise made to shape, with the same four-petaled florals and the addition of a five-petaled variety. Presented in mirror image on the satin of the collar and cuffs of the mitts are strawberries, rose hips, and other flowers and fruit worked in satin, stem, long-and-short stitch, and French knots with twisted silk threads and floss in pale rose and salmon pinks, blues icy and celestial, greens from chartreuse to teal, and accents of brown and eggplant silks. The flower on the interior of each mitt's dorsal is visible only when folded back.

The related though not identical embroidery and two silver bobbin laces suggest a marriage of elements as early as the mid-eighteenth century. The collar may have initially resembled the plain black velvet example worn by Daina de' Valsecchi; the velvet extends uninterrupted beneath the satin yoke up to the short standing collar or *collaretto*. An embroidered velvet collar in the Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo (Cl. XXIV n. 0007) has a similar *collaretto*, confirming this construction detail as early and unique to regional Italian dress. The yellow satin was likely a later addition intended to enliven the collar, having possibly been reused from a collar, such as one of yellow silk of related shape at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (43.1197), or robing, such as another yellow silk example at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (63.2.13).

The form and decoration of the collar and cuffs suggest that they were made—and likely reworked—in northern Italy, perhaps near Venice for fancy dress at Carnevale. The silks recall the carnivalesque exuberance as well as quotidian life in Venice. Black fabrics, and especially velvets, were among La Serenissima's most recognizable products and, as late as 1767, the Senate limited non-black attire in public; women could only wear "cotoli mezzi aperti" (half-open or slit skirts) revealing glimpses of colored petticoats. It is tempting to think that this set's wearer updated her black velvet collar to match an existing pair of mitts to celebrate, hidden by her *moretta* (mask).

Another embroidered velvet collar is at the Victoria & Albert Museum (24-1899). Related side-closing embroidered velvet mitts include those at the Museo Stibbert (14.077); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (38.1256a-b, 38.1331a-b, 43.1972a-b); and Victoria & Albert Museum (347&A-1903). A pair with similar lining under the cuff is at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (38.1329a-b).

MDA

SILK DAMASK ROUND GOWN

American, ca. 1805–10 (the silk Chinese, ca. 1775)

Divitis Indiae usque ad ultimum sinum
—Motto of Salem, Massachusetts

Although only formally adopted in 1839, the above slogan accurately represents a long history of international maritime commerce in the port city of Salem. Meaning "To the farthest port of the rich Indies," it reflects Salem's aspirations to exploit India's legendary abundance, and to bring back its various treasures for the benefit of the American citizenry and merchants.

By the late eighteenth century, Salem was a busy and cosmopolitan port city, readily consuming exotic goods from the India and China trades. Ships that left with rum, cod, and shoes from nearby Lynn returned laden with spices, tea, chinaware, indigo, and silks, which, as Surveyor of the Port of Salem from 1846 to 1849, the town's most famous native son, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), witnessed firsthand. This "merchandise that will readily be turned to gold," as he later wrote in "The Custom House" (1850), brought wealth to the city as well as the country at-large—in the first half of the nineteenth century, fully 5 percent of the total revenue of the United States was derived from the port of Salem.

Never a great fan of his native city, Hawthorne nevertheless described in "The Custom House" the feeling he had for "Old Salem, which, in lack of a better phrase, I must be content to call affection." This he attributed to the "deep and aged roots which my family has stuck into the soil," where for centuries, his ancestors were born and died, many of them sailors. "This long connexion of a family with one spot," he mused, "as its place of birth and burial, creates a kindred between the human being and the locality, quite independent of any charm in the scenery or moral circumstances that surround him."

This dress, made of imported Chinese damask, represents both the United States' general thirst for foreign silks as well as a more specific material "connexion" to Salem's history. Altered from its original form, it encapsulates the quintessentially American ideals of thrift and filial devotion, preserving the layered traces of its earlier history by virtue of one family's commitment to the preservation of its past for two centuries. A note pinned to the garment's interior identifies it as the wedding gown of Miriam Lord (1748–1826), who married Richard Manning (1755–1813) in Ipswich in May 1776. Miriam was Hawthorne's grandmother through her daughter Elizabeth (1780–1849), the third of the couple's nine children. Richard was a blacksmith before founding the Salem and Boston Stagecoach Company, whose success supported his large family.

Her grandson remembered his "Grandmaam" Miriam—who administered the family's wealth following her husband's death—as a rather stern and parsimonious woman. This frugality may have been the reason her wedding gown was updated some thirty years later into the dress that survives today. Having undertaken a journey across several oceans that may have taken a year or more, every scrap of silk that made it to the New World was precious, and therefore often salvaged and reused.

In its current form, the dress corresponds to the style popular from about 1805 to 1810, with a high, round bust, drawstring neckline, and elbow-length fitted sleeves. Although it has been altered, the work was carefully done, so that seams are discreetly hidden and the pattern of the brilliant blue silk appears with as little interruption as possible. The smallest pieces—perhaps pieces of the robings from the original gown—were used across the bust, where they were gathered by the blue silk ribbon drawstring at the neckline, and likely further veiled by a kerchief. Selvedge-width panels were saved for the front and back of the skirt, with triangular gores inserted either side for fullness. A pocket slit is concealed below the waist on the right side. Evidence of the original dress can be glimpsed on the interior, where the panels forming the sides have been folded in but not cut, revealing the telltale patterning and pleating of a robe à l'anglaise (called a night gown in English); this left the dress open to further transformations in the future. The bodice is lined with what is likely an Indian cotton, the looped end of the length and selvedges economically used as finished edges.

White was not the standard color for wedding gowns until the early nineteenth century, and in colonial America, women were often married in their best dress, no matter the color. While American consumers seem to have generally preferred light blue and beige silk damasks, this may be an example of the color referred to as "Miserene Blou" in the papers of the New York merchant Mary Alexander (1693–1760) at the New-York Historical Society. Alexander's orders for India damasks in 1750 include pieces in this color, a corruption of the French term "bleu Mazarin" denoting a deep hyacinth shade (Alexander Papers, N-YHS, box 10, folder 11).

The pattern of the silk is typical of "India damasks" produced in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, with a straight repeat of serpentine peonies, passionflowers, and flame-shaped leaves echoed three times across its breadth. The term reflects not the origins of these materials but rather the fact that they were exported by the British East India Company in the years before American independence, when direct trade with the East became possible; they were, in fact, only woven in China and traded through the port of Canton (Guangzhou). In contrast to English damasks—stiffer, thinner, and often with just one repeat across the width—"India damasks" were supple and wide, and were, therefore, popular for interior furnishings such as bed and wall hangings; it is, indeed, possible that even before becoming Miriam Lord's wedding dress, the silk of this dress started out in one of those contexts. The width of the panels (twenty-nine inches) and the holes left by temple bars in the contrasting selvedges during weaving confirm the silk's Eastern origins. At the time it was woven, it would have been illegal to purchase in England, but Chinese silks could be re-exported to the colonies, a lucrative and captive market.

Several American dresses made of Chinese damask attest to their popularity in the colonial period. An altered dress, shoes, workbag, pocketbook, and textile fragment that belonged to a New York woman, all made from the same silk, are now at Colonial Williamsburg (1985-143; 1993.126-128; 2009.64), along with a panel of Chinese damask very similar to the one found on the present gown (1970-10). Another dress with Georgia provenance is in the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.35-1972). Similar one-piece round gowns can be seen in American portraits of the same date, such as one of Catherine Bicking Reynolds Kuhn by James Peale at Winterthur Museum (2018.0001) and of Mrs. Barbara Baker Murphy by Joshua Johnson at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (1983.95.56).

Provenance: This dress is part of a larger cache of clothing and textiles that descended in the Manning family of Salem, Massachusetts, containing objects from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries (see pp. 15–18 and 29–30). These pieces descended through Miriam's son Robert (1784–1842) and his wife Rebecca Dodge Burnham, to their daughter Rebecca (Becky) Burnham (1834–1933), who loaned family heirlooms to exhibitions organized by the Massachusetts chapter of the Daughters of the Revolution in 1893, and later donated family papers to the Essex Institute (now Peabody Essex Museum), Salem. Following Becky's death, these items descended to her nephew, Dr. Richard Clarke Manning (1867–1959), who brought them to Ohio, where he taught Latin at Kenyon College. He gave still more pieces to the Essex Institute, including the famous 1841 portrait of his distant cousin, Nathaniel Hawthorne, by Charles Osborne, but the clothing stayed with the family. In 1938, according to the same note pinned to the dress, he lent the dress to an exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the settlement of the Northwest Territories at the J. S. Ringwalt Department Store in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, just a few miles from Kenyon. Dr. Manning and his wife had no children, and the family's historical costume passed on his death to his maternal aunt, Marie Hartley. It then descended through her son Cyril and grandson Baron Manning Hartley (1924–1994) to his second wife, Bess Kraly MacNeille, before being acquired by Cora Ginsburg LLC in 2021.

WDG

SILK GAUZE DAY DRESS

American, ca. 1861–63

A close examination of *Godey's Lady's Book* (1830–98), the leading fashion publication in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century, provides clues to dating this understated yet supremely elegant silk gauze day dress with a Massachusetts provenance. Its most distinctive features are the confectionary-like ruched yoke and sleeves that closely resemble the "puffed" spencers, as well as blouses, that came into vogue in 1861 and were frequently illustrated and reported on in *Godey's* for the next two years. As separate garments, spencers—usually of white muslin—were worn with solid-colored skirts; however, dresses also incorporated this type of ruched embellishment. In the magazine's regular column "Chitchat upon New York and Philadelphia Fashions" for July 1862, the editor commented, "The favorite style for organdies and such materials seem to be the puffed, plaited, and drawn bodies. They are made both high and low-necked, and are drawn crosswise, lengthwise, or drawn only to form a yoke." One of "the exquisite specimens" for "watering place" attire that found favor with the editor that same month was a dress of white muslin with "body and sleeves … of puffs and rows of inserting."

This gown's sheer silk gauze and subtle hue indicate that it was intended for summer wear. Gauze was among the lightweight fabrics promoted for warm months by the periodical in 1861 and 1862, which also included Chambéry gauze (a satin-striped gauze), organdy, muslin, and grenadine. Although the poetic names of colors used by fashion editors are difficult to associate directly with historical garments, "ashes of roses" might well describe this shade of dusty pink. According to *Godey's*, this color was popular from the late 1850s to the mid-1860s for wool and silk day and evening dresses, light wool cloaks, traveling wraps, and a felt bonnet with matching velvet and feathers. The color plate for August 1863 includes an evening dress of "ashes of roses silk" trimmed with black lace and magenta velvet bands, and in February 1865, the editor noted "a very elegant dress" from the establishment of the well-known New York City couturiere Mme Demorest "of heavy ashes of roses Gros d'Afrique" (a ribbed silk).

The skirt's silhouette conforms to *Godey's* observation in April 1863 that longer dresses with "perfect trains behind" as well as their supporting "steel petticoats" were "in the shape of *bells*." The editor opined that this look was "much more graceful and becoming than the *balloon*-shaped crinolines of a few years ago"—a change that, for those who wished to appear up-to-date, would require a new (or altered dress) and corresponding understructure. Although skirts of the early 1860s were often gored to lie flat over the hips, this unlined lightweight gauze is used in full selvedge widths that are box-pleated into the waist, creating the fashionably smooth line.

Apart from the puffed yoke and sleeves, the only other visual ornamentation on the dress is the addition of two rosettes that decorate the self-fabric belt at the center front and back, accentuating the round waist. Despite the editor's remarks in March 1862 that pointed bodices "were welcomed back by many ladies to whom the round waistband gave a very dumpy appearance," black-and-white engravings and color plates in *Godey's* continued to depict round-waisted dresses with matching or coordinating belts fastened with a clasp at the front well beyond that year. Lined in white cotton, this bodice is lightly reinforced with two short bones on each side of the front opening that is secured with concealed hooks and eyes.

A white linen tarlatan dress with similarly puffed bodice and sleeves dating to about 1864 in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York (47.83.1ab) was exhibited in *Whistler, Women, and Fashion*, held at the Frick Collection in 2003, alongside the artist's *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864) that depicts a young woman in a sheer white dress with puffed sleeves.

Provenance: The dress descended in the Manning family of Salem, Massachusetts (see pp. 11–14 and 29–30 for other examples from this family). Although the wearer has not been identified, she may be Sarah Elizabeth Yeaton Gould (1833–1911) of New Hampshire, who married Richard Clarke Manning (1830–1904) in 1865. Richard Manning was a member of the Common Council and the Board of Aldermen of the town of Salem. He also served on the board of the Essex Institute and was president of the Salem Athenaeum. At the time of her wedding to Manning, Gould (née Yeaton) was a young widow.

MM

DAY DRESS OF SILK MOIRÉ TRIMMED WITH VELVET

French, ca. 1862–65

In the mid-nineteenth century, black silk moiré was the height of chic. In French, U.S., and English fashion periodicals, editors' columns and plates attest to the widespread vogue for this rich fabric known as "moire antique" in an array of colors including black—long associated with mourning. In April 1862, the *Petit Courrier des Dames* reported that "la moire antique noire" was among the colors used for spring daytime toilettes. A year later, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* observed that "magnificent *moirés*" were among the "black silks … worn this season … for street dress, or as a useful home dress, also in costly dinner toilet." And in November 1864, the English publication *Punch* gently ridiculed the preference among "young, rich, and elegant ladies [for] wearing dresses decidedly mourning in their appearance," querying, "who is not possessed of a black moire antique?" Further, the increasingly blurred distinction between fashionable and half-mourning dress was noted by the *Petit Courrier* in January 1866 when it informed readers that one of the most well-known mourning establishments in Paris was offering "superb winter fabrics" including black "moires antiques" that "could perfectly be worn without being in mourning."

Whether she was making a fashion statement or in the later stages of bereavement, the wearer of this elegant two-piece ensemble of lustrous black silk moiré trimmed with midnight-blue velvet demonstrated her awareness of the latest styles. The jacket's construction and shape of the skirt indicate a date of about 1862 to 1865. In October 1863, *Le Journal des Coiffeurs* described the most popular cuts for fitted bodices including the "postillon" that featured two points or squared ends at the front and a distinctive "swallow-tail" basque at the back. The curved velvet bands on the bodice front may simulate the "Figaro" style that comprised a short jacket with a cutaway hem and a vest; the same issue of the *Journal* referred to a bodice with a Figaro front and "basque-postillon" back. Velvet bands edged with black silk piping also decorate the center-front edges of the jacket, fastened with black silk-covered buttons, the cuffs of the two-piece "coat" sleeves and their jaunty bows, and the rectangular two-part basque, finished with a pair of buttons. The understated use of trimming that appears only on the jacket corresponds to the fashion update in the September 2, 1865, issue of the *Petit Courrier* that moiré dresses now had minimal ornamentation. Around 1860, the hemispherical shape of the mid-1850s shifted to a silhouette with a flatter front, back fullness, and a trained hem. On the skirt's interior, two pairs of linen tapes stitched to the lower sides and intended to be drawn through small metal rings tacked at intervals across the back panels would have allowed the wearer to accentuate this newly fashionable angularity. A narrow pleated black taffeta flounce at the hem barely conceals a white lace-edged dust ruffle.

The textile historian Philip Sykas notes: "Moiré seems to reflect the spiritual side of mid-century Victorian society at a time of reawakening anxieties about the destructiveness of industrial growth and renewed interest in nature" (Philip Sykas, "Textiles" in *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Age of Empire*, ed. Denise Amy Baxter, 2018). The sheen and striking undulatory pattern of moiré—which a contemporary French fashion writer evocatively likened to a tear shed by dawn and wiped away by a ray of sun—is displayed to advantage by the voluminous skirt that would have been supported by a cage crinoline. The term "moire antique" refers to the centuries-old finishing technique, known as calendering, in which a panel of weft-ribbed silk is folded in half lengthwise and subjected to weight and heat. The uneven flattening of the ribs results in variance in light reflection and symmetrical watery outlines on either side of the crease. Here, the seamstress strategically placed the fold at the center back of the bodice, highlighting the rippling filets. The beauty of moirés was appreciated in daylight, but their shimmering surface was most effective at night; in April 1863, *Godey's* averred that these silks were "richer still in the golden artificial light of the chandelier." Although British manufacturers led in the production of high-end moirés in the 1850s, French fashion periodicals of the 1860s affirm the success of the Lyonnais silk industry in creating these sought-after textiles that signified wealth and status.

A fashionable black moiré dress with two bodices dating to about 1861 is in the collection of the Palazzo Pitti (TA6777); a black moiré evening dress for mourning, also about 1861, from the collection of Roy Langford, was exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1988 exhibition *From Queen to Empress* and appears in the catalogue (see p. 74, cat. no. 48).

MM

EMBROIDERED SILK CREPE OUTER KIMONO

Japanese (probably Kyoto), ca. 1800–50

EMBROIDERED SILK GAUZE AND TAFFETA TEA GOWN

British (the silk Japanese), ca. 1875–80

From the shogun's inner palace to the parlors of England, these two embroidered-and-dyed garments illustrate the sartorial forecasts for women across two cultures during the nineteenth century. At the same time, they provide a road map for changing social structures at large: the reluctant acceptance of Western ideas of modernity in Japan, the trickle-down codification of the mores of the British elite, and *Japoniste* fascinations that could border on misunderstanding and misappropriation.

During the Edo period (1603–1867), women of the military and ruling elite (that is, the samurai class) dressed in richly decorated *uchikake* (outer kimono) like this one for winter formal occasions. Worn open to reveal the kimono underneath rather than secured at the waist, the *uchikake* customarily has a thickly wadded hem to stabilize it on the wearer's body as she walked. Typically featuring nearly floor-length sleeves as on *furisode* (literally "swinging sleeves") worn by young women, *uchikake* often had their sleeves shortened according to marriage status and age, as on the present example.

Sumptuary prescriptions dictated who could wear certain ornament, and the motifs on this robe, called *goshodoki* (literally "palace court style") were also reserved for samurai-class women. The seven panels of apple green *chirimen* (silk crepe) from which this kimono is constructed teem with such decoration. *Goshodoki* consisted of objects and architectural elements alluding to classical literature and Noh theatre hidden among land- and seascapes. Extant kimono and *hinagata bon* (pattern books) reveal the enormous variety and customizability within this genre. On this example, clouds, waves, plum blossoms, willow trees, chrysanthemum, paulownia, and pines create an atmosphere for the brushwood gate and pavilion set with the musical instruments *biwa* and *koto*, both taken from the eleventh-century novel *The Tale of Genji.* Fishing boats, nets, a *kasa* (hat), and a *koshimino* (straw skirt) might refer to the activity of *ukai* (cormorant fishing) and the eponymous Noh play dating to the Muromachi period (1338–1573). The sometimes-obscure literary references even constituted a game among ladies to identify the sources of the *goshodoki* worn by others.

These complex, detailed compositions were best suited to *yuzen* dyeing, wherein the artist draws freehand in a rice-paste resist using a metal-tipped tube. The dyed lattice fillings of the pines and flower heads are executed in *kata kanoko* (stenciling), imitating the even more laborious *kanoko shibori* (fawn spot tie-dyeing), in which tiny sections of fabric are tied off in resist, resulting in tightly packed circles. The embroiderer completed the scene, highlighting passages in silk flosses with *hira-nui* (satin stitch), *tome-nui* (a fixing stitch to secure *hira-nui*), *kaeshi-nui* (outline stitch), *matsuri-nui* (stem stitch), and *koma-nui* (couching) to lay the silvered- and gilt-paper-wrapped silk threads. The lining and hem of undecorated *benibana* (safflower)-dyed plain-weave silk offsets the density of the design and the glimmering metallic embroidery.

Samurai-class women favored kimono like this until the final years of the Edo period, when the forced opening of Japan's ports in the 1850s effected the Tokugawa shogunate's imminent collapse and the end of mandates that regulated such dress. This was also the beginning of Japan's westernization and the flood of Japanese art into Europe. As the Meiji Emperor embraced Western-style clothing at his court, relegating *goshodoki* to the past and *uchikake* to ceremonies and weddings, families once wealthy under the feudal system sold their wardrobes. These caught the eyes of new, eager Western clientele, whose romanticized and misguided notions about the "floating world" classified these imports as possessing any combination of exoticism, eroticism, interiority, femininity, and naivete.

These ideas together manifested in the popularity of transforming kimono into European garments like the dressing gown (also called a wrapper or morning gown) as well as its highly ritualized cousin, the tea gown. As the U.S. periodical *The Puritan: A Journal for Gentlewomen* noted in 1899, "The Japanese kimono is an excellent model for any sort of wrapper, but is particularly suitable for this bedside garment, as it demands no decoration, and, falling in long, straight lines to the feet, covers the night dress and conceals effectually all eccentricities of an uncorseted figure." Moreover, kimono were ideal for European undress for their ornamentation, which was still considered too ostentatious for use outside the home. "Japanese and Chinese patterns are, as a rule, too *bizarre* for us quiet Occidentals," proclaimed the etiquette writer Fanny Douglas in

1894. “Only in tea-gowns and morning-gowns can they be freely indulged in.”

The relationship between Asian silks and European undress was also bound up with notions of the apparently questionable mores of those who relished in these new silhouettes, under which a lady might loosen her corset and consequently, according to some, her morals. Dressing gowns were worn only at the most intimate hours of the day, but the development of the tea gown in the 1870s posed a threat for its greater visibility. Worn by the mistress of the house while receiving male and female guests in her parlor or drawing room, the tea gown provocatively blurred the boundaries between public and private domestic spaces, formal and informal, fancy dress and undress. In 1878, one writer called the garment “absolutely useless and utterly ridiculous; but this is not the worst that may be said about it. It is, to all intents and purposes, a *déshabillé*; and so great is the force of association, that the conversation is exceedingly apt, nay almost certain, to become *déshabillé* as well.”

The wearer and likely maker of this British tea gown might have eschewed a fully laced corset in favor of a scandalously loosened one. The gown’s construction from imported silk gauze (*ro*) further emphasizes the prevailing tropes of the exotic and playful as well as the feminine and seductive. The gauze’s deep, uniform creases reveal it was formerly a complete kimono, likely a *hitoe* or unlined summer robe, stenciled and embroidered with a garden of wisteria, peonies, chrysanthemum, butterflies, and waves. At front, two darted panels form a faux overgown across the cornflower blue taffeta attached underdress with a hidden center-front placket. The fitted princess back, constructed from four panels, extends into the trained skirt of alternating gauze and taffeta gores. Flowing, open sleeves revealing taffeta undersleeves with gauze cuffs reference *furisode*. Patch pockets hidden beneath the overdress are finished with peach silk bows coordinated to the sleeve edging and cuff lining. Despite its homemade origin, the gown is as cleverly pieced as its professionally executed forebear; the *hitoe* fold lines are lined up symmetrically, the hanging wisteria are centered along the princess back, and gilded crashing waves mirror each other along the upper arms.

Although one can only speculate about the maker-wearer, her Japanese-style tea gown suggests aspirations of the upward mobility, fashionability, and aestheticism that were specifically marketed to middle-class female consumers. In 1898, the British weekly satirical *To-Day* profiled a fictional “weak-minded” lady who, when tasked to visit Liberty’s to replace tattered tablecloths, returned home with “materials for a Japanese tea-gown, seven squares of velveteen, two embroidered fire-screens, and a copper gong! … And they have all turned out white elephants. The tea-gown is much grander than anything I should care to wear here in the suburbs.”

A nearly identical embroidered green crepe *uchikake* is at the British Museum (1981,0812.1); also probably once the property of a samurai-class woman, it has fasteners sewn on the lapel and interior indicating its Western reuse as a dressing gown. A refashioned *kosode* is in the collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute; tea gowns made from Japanese kimono are at the FIDM Museum (80.40.1) and the Museum at FIT (80.1.4).

MDA

TIE-DYED AND BLOCK-PRINTED SILK BANDANAS

India (Bengal, for the American market), ca. 1800–50

The bandana is one of India's most enduring introductions to the Western wardrobe. From the time these colorful squares of silk first landed on European shores in the 1720s, they have enjoyed near constant popularity, gaining new and varied cultural associations even as they have remained an enduring symbol of working-class fashion.

Like Chinese silks (see pp. 11–14), Indian bandanas and handkerchiefs were prohibited for domestic sale in England in the eighteenth century but legal for re-export to the colonies. The modern bandana is a synthesis of the two styles represented by this pair, which descended in the Manning family of Salem, Massachusetts (see pp. 11–18). This group represents just a sampling of the products of Eastern silk looms available to consumers in one of the East Coast's busiest port cities, of which *bandannoes* would have been among the most popular. In 1792, the Salem merchant William Gray asked his India-bound ship's captain to pursue "sugar, saltpeters, Bandanno silk Handerchiefs, or other such goods as you suppose will answer best in this market." The yellow example seen here carries a label identifying its owner as "R. B. Manning," probably a reference to Robert Manning Jr. (1827–1902).

The center of manufacture and trade in tie-dyed bandanas was Kasimbazar, near the capital of the province of Bengal under the Mughals, Murshidabad. Bandanas were just one of the class of "Cossimbuzar Prohibited Goods" exported by the British East India Company after establishing a factory there in 1658. Handkerchiefs, of which the bandana was a subset, were a universal fashion accessory in the eighteenth century, worn by both men and women around the neck or shoulders. The rise in popularity of snuff also created a new class of indispensable accessory, the pocket handkerchief, and the richly colored, relatively inexpensive silk bandanas from Bengal were uniquely suited to meet the demand.

From the Hindi verb *bandhna*, meaning "to tie," the *bandanno* originally signified the style typified by the yellow example seen here, which was made by tying string tightly around the undyed silk before plunging it into a dyebath. Indian artisans had been practicing this tie-dyeing technique since at least the sixth or seventh centuries AD, and nearly all areas of the subcontinent produced some sort of *bandhani* textiles. These "ordinary," "Bird's-eye," or "India" *bandannoes*, as they appear to have been referred to in England, were the first to reach the American colonies. They would have been imported as long loom-width pieces with multiple bandanas printed along the length, which could be cut up and hemmed for sale. Grouped lines of square dots forming floating blocks are typical on these early pieces, with some having the resisted dots painted by hand in contrasting colors.

Dark red or purple seem to have been the most popular hues, as these would not show dirt as easily as lighter colors. The New York merchant James Beekman ordered "spotted red Bandanna" handkerchiefs in 1773, and other red bandanas appear frequently in depictions of seamen, street peddlers, agricultural workers, and artists in print and paint. The well-known 1789 portrait of the Connecticut merchant Elijah Boardman (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979.395) shows what appear to be spotted bandana textiles on a shelf in his storeroom, though these may be English imitations that began to supplant Indian examples by the turn of the nineteenth century. Manufacturers in Manchester had been experimenting with resist-dyeing techniques to imitate *bandannoes* since at least 1750, initially on European linen but later on cotton and silk. Indian *bandannoes* were also worn by enslaved persons on Southern plantations and in the West Indies, though cheaper English imitations soon supplanted Bengali originals.

Tie-dyed bandanas began to lose popularity around the second quarter of the nineteenth century when more colorful block-printed bandanas known as *choppa*s (from the Hindi *chhapna*, "to print") gained favor. In 1817, the Boston importer Henry Lee wrote to his agents in Calcutta, "I find that choppas are more in demand and bandannas less so than when you left—they are not in fashion and many are yet on hand." The example from the Manning family (right) is characteristic, its floral pattern created by applying a resist of wax or paste with blocks to the tussar silk ground and then dyeing in madder to form a red ground with purple borders. *Choppa* bandanas resemble the printed saris of Berhampur (in Odisha, historic Orissa), where they were probably manufactured. In 1835 alone, the East India Company imported 188,000 *choppa*s, though by the second half of the nineteenth century, block-printed English copies had all but eliminated the need for Indian imports.

Due to their delicacy, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century tie-dyed bandanas are rare. Yellow-ground bandanas are at Colonial Williamsburg (1971-1449,5) and the Victoria & Albert Museum (IS 4936, IS.678-1883). Similar *choppa*s are at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (11.60.478-483); the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (98.1819; 99.841; 36.253; 45.608); Philadelphia Museum of Art (1912-240; 2017-191-3); and the Victoria & Albert Museum (IS.17-2008).

Bandanno: 33 ½ x 31 ¾ in.   *Choppa*: 31 x 32 ¾ in.

WDG

PRINTED COTTON MOTHER AND DAUGHTER DAY DRESSES

English, 1826–30

Long before mother/daughter look-alike outfits became a marketing strategy in the twentieth century, these matching printed cotton dresses dating to about 1826–30 served to visually reinforce the nineteenth-century custom of clothing young girls like adult women in preparation for their future roles as consumers of fashion. Although fashion plates of the mid-to-late 1820s depict the two ages together in strikingly similar garments, these examples of early nineteenth-century female daywear may be a rare survival of intergenerational identical dressing.

The hourglass silhouette that dominated the Romantic moment in fashion that was at its height from the mid-1820s to the mid-1830s is evident in the expansive gigot sleeves, fitted bodices, and full skirts of both dresses. The upper sleeves are reinforced with white cotton that also lines the bodices, and the skirts are constructed from full selvedge widths—five in the woman's dress and four in the girl's. From the mid-to-late 1820s, *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics* (1809–29) illustrated women's day attire with high front-closing "corsages" similar to this adult gown, and the lightly pleated back bodice corresponds to the description of a promenade dress "with a little fulness in the centre of … the back set in, in the band round the waist," shown in the *Repository* in August 1827. The primary distinction between the two dresses is their respective trimming. Gathered flounces at the hem edged with pale-yellow wool braid that also ornaments the neckline, sleeve cuffs with self-fabric buttoned bands, and back bodice seams lend a more grown-up appearance to the woman's gown; in September 1827, the *Repository* showed a seaside costume of striped yellow silk with "two deep flounces, of the same material as the dress." The child's dress is decorated more simply with curved self-fabric bands on the bodice front.

Although the two garments show signs of previous folds and stitching lines, the overall construction and finishing are expertly done. Sewn to the side seams of the bodice in the woman's dress are two printed-cotton flaps extended with white linen to cross over the bust, suggesting a subsequent modification for pregnancy or nursing. While the center-front opening and apron-style skirt gathered onto a drawstring would be appropriate for an expectant or nursing mother, this type of construction was common in the 1820s for fashionable dresses as well. In the little girl's dress, the sleeves and cuffs have been pieced and tucks at the lower hem have been let out, likely to accommodate her increase in height.

The roller-printed cotton was probably manufactured in Lancashire, the burgeoning center of the cotton industry in England in the early decades of the nineteenth century that increasingly catered to middle- and working-class consumers avid to purchase the latest designs at affordable prices. Vertical serpentine bands comprising small clusters of red-and-white palm trees, seaweed forms, and conch-like shells alternate with delicate white fronds on a yellow ground—a color scheme that was especially popular between 1826 and 1829. Calico designers regularly sought inspiration in the natural world and relied on a range of available printed sources, including those illustrating botanical and marine specimens. While the definition of the engraving in this cotton that employs parallel lines rather than stippling suggests a mid-range market, the rendering of the feathery foliage and the palette are similar to designs produced by the high-end London firm Thomas Vaughan & Sons (1790–ca. 1835) in the Victoria & Albert Museum (E.1557-1913, E.1624-1913 [dated August 1825], E.1630-1913, and E.1640-1913) and to several that appear in an 1820s dyer's manual held by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (1950-99-1).

Early nineteenth-century printers had recourse to a variety of equipment and coloration methods in their finishing of cottons. In this example, it is likely that a mule machine, which combined an engraved roller for fine details and a surface roller for the broader areas of color in the main motifs, was employed. First, a mordant was applied to fix the red color then the cloth was subsequently dyed with madder. After washing to clear the excess dyestuff, a resist was block printed to delineate the white fronds and, finally, the cotton was mordanted again in preparation for the yellow dyebath. Although chrome yellow, a recently introduced bright mineral dye was enormously popular in the 1820s and influenced the palette of printed cottons, quercitron derived from bark was used here.

A printed cotton day dress dated ca. 1826–27 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1981.12.1) is remarkably similar to the adult dress. In addition to the center front opening, apron skirt, and gathered back bodice, the red, yellow, and white colors of the diamond-patterned fabric is the same.

MM

LINEN DRESS WITH WHEAT SHEAF EMBROIDERY

French, ca. 1804–6

Classical antiquity was the dominant referent for French women's fashion at the turn of the nineteenth century. Styles inspired by the draped forms of Greek and Roman statuary and named after historical and mythological figures underscored the widespread influence of the ancient world on postrevolutionary France. *La mode* offered women, who were officially excluded from participating in the political sphere, the opportunity to communicate their taste as well as their embrace of antique art and ideals.

The white columnar dress that turned fashionable women into "living" statues was ubiquitous from about 1795 to 1810. In this example, the wide square neckline, short, puffed, or "bouffantes" sleeves, back closure, and placement of the matching cotton embroidery date it to about 1804 to 1806. Numerous plates from the *Journal des dames et des modes* (1797–1839) show dresses of similar shape with floral-and-foliate embroidery on the bodice, sleeves, and hem. The elegance of this dress suggests that it may have been worn for a semiformal occasion; in May 1804, the editor noted that the most sought-after dresses for "demi-parure" were of white percale embroidered with white cotton, while a plate dating to June 1805 (No. 644) illustrates a "demi-parure" white cotton gown with large-scale polychrome floral-and-foliate embroidery at the hem. However, plates from the periodical also depict very similar dresses identified as "Costume de Promenade," and both styles were made as "robes rondes," with evenly round hems. Although cotton was the favored fabric for these Greco-Roman toilettes, a variety of linens were also stylishly appropriate; the *Journal* refers to "batiste," "linon," and "toile." Here, the weight and semitransparent quality likely indicate a fine toile.

The plain white surface of early nineteenth-century dresses was the perfect foil for embroidery and the *Journal des dames* frequently refers to the widespread popularity of needlework as a form of decoration, the use of both white cotton and colored silks and wools, and the most up-to-date motifs. This gown's hem is encircled by padded wheat sheaves worked in French knots outlined with couched threads; stems and attenuated leaves in laid work, couching, and chain stitch; and a band comprising rows of interlocking ovals and double C-shapes, also executed in French knots, chain stitch, and couching. The gathered neckline, created by a single drawstring tied at the center back, emphasizes the three-dimensional effect of the embroidery. At the hem, the motifs extend over the side seams of the skirt, constructed from two forty-five-inch selvedge widths. In July 1804, the periodical reported that large, detached flowers were the most "à la mode" and that these oversized motifs that might cover a substantial portion of the hem were embroidered in thick white cotton. The wearer of the dress herself may have stitched its decoration. In the same May 1804 issue cited above, the *Journal* declared that, of all the female skills, embroidery was the most in vogue and that a "petite-maîtresse" could often be found in her boudoir, working at her gown.

While many contemporary commentators deplored the shape-revealing aspects of these flimsy dresses, others professed that their unrestrictive form with its emphasis on the bust both allowed for and acceptably displayed women's presumed natural role as mothers—their primary responsibility in the new Republican society. In selecting wheat sheaves—the symbol of Ceres, the Roman goddess of agriculture, fertility, and maternal love—to ornament her dress, the wearer may have simply indulged in a nod to *la mode à l'antique,* or she may have deliberately signaled her own fecundity, potential or already manifest. A plate in the *Journal des dames* from 30 Nivose, Year 9 (19 January 1801, No. 274) depicts a young woman dressed in white, seated on a classicizing canapé, and suitably occupied with needle and thread; her "coëffure à la Cérès" comprises a white bandeau wrapped around her chignon and an arc of wheat sheaves across the top of her forehead. In January 1804, the *Journal* described "guirlandes à la Cérès" with "ripe wheat sheaves" and various flowers that currently adorned women's hair.

A trained mull gown also dating from about 1804 to 1806 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art features similar three-dimensional wheat sheaves on the bodice, down the center front, and around the hem (CI 07.146.5). A white linen dress of comparable weight in the collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, dated ca. 1805–10, is embroidered around the neckline and at the edges of the short sleeves in white cotton thread with large dots in French knots and satin stitch (UFAC 48.3.1).

MM

SILK EVENING GOWN

MADAME GRÈS

French (Paris), Fall/Winter 1948

Madame Grès (1903–1993) approached cloth as a sculptural medium. By the mid-1930s, when she was still calling herself Mademoiselle Alix, she had already developed the unique technique she employed to create draped and pleated gowns that were simultaneously up-to-the-minute and an amalgam of classical Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Indian dress. Draping extra-wide "Alix jersey" directly from the bolt onto a mannequin, she worked from the shoulders down, manipulating the textile into orderly pleats, each of which was imperceptibly stitched to its neighbor, and then pinned to the form. Very little cutting was involved: each panel was joined to the next to create an uninterrupted sheath, without a waist seam, the skirt left to hang freely from the wearer's hips. In 1937, *Vogue* called Alix "your favorite sculptress" and noted that one jersey dinner dress "turns you into a Parian marble statue." "We cannot speak of cutting," noted *L'Officiel* in 1938, "but of sculpture with Alix, who seems to carve and chisel the very material, who kneads and shapes the fabrics until giving them the very form of her dream."

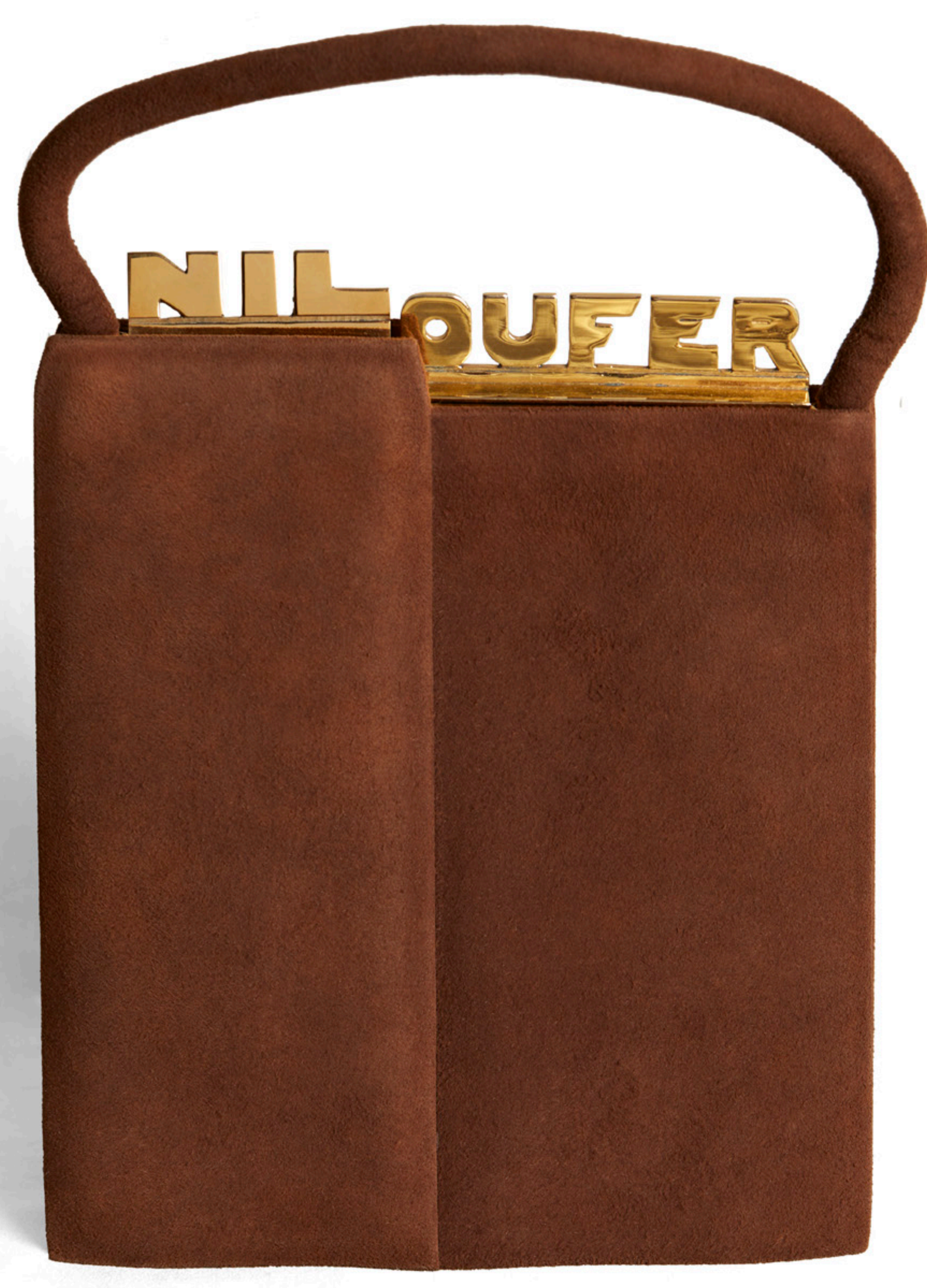
Over the course of fifty-five years—the longest continuous career, in fact, of any female couturiere of the twentieth century—Grès pursued her dream of perfection, while journalists struggled to describe her latest creations, often exasperated by the lack of dramatic change from one season to the next, or indeed one decade to the next. As Enid Nemy reported in the *New York Times* in 1979, the designer's own staff found it impossible to determine the exact date of a particular design: "We do not go by the years."

Forbidden by her parents to become a sculptor, Grès turned to dressmaking. Although she claimed to have had no professional training, she likely worked at the house of Premet before striking out on her own. In 1933, the house of Alix Barton opened on the rue de Miromesnil, a collaboration between the designer and a business partner named Julie Barton. The following year, the house became the maison Alix when it opened on the rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, flourishing for the remainder of the decade with the success of the designer's sensual jersey gowns. In 1942, after being accused of being Jewish, Grès sold her portion of the business, and opened the house of Grès at 1 rue de la Paix, where she remained for the rest of her career. The new name was lifted from her husband, a Russian painter named Serge Anatolievitch Czerefkow, who signed his paintings with the cypher "Grès."

Created in 1948, this evening dress exemplifies the tangible eroticism that informs all of Grès's jersey dresses. Manufactured by Rodier, six panels of tissue-thin sky-blue knit fabric (probably a mixture of silk and rayon) fall from the right shoulder as if thrown from the bolt. Waves of diagonal pleats flow over the bust, where they are tacked into lines that bisect the torso, giving the effect of a loose sheath lashed to the body below with invisible ligatures. By varying the width and depth of the pleats as the silk wound around the torso, Grès was able to coax them into vertical alignment so that they fall from a shallow yoke below the hips to the floor in an unbroken cascade. Inside, an underbodice made from a single layer of organza with just two bones under the left arm supports the intricate drapery, while a blue crepe slip protects the wearer's modesty. The wide lavender satin ribbon that seemingly catches the jersey in a knot on the shoulder, and which emerges at the left bust toward the back, is a romantic foil to the classical purity of the rest of the gown. On a body in motion, the pleats would swell and tense against the bands of stitching as the wearer moved, in contrast with the incessant fluid motion of the skirt. Grès believed that "there is nothing so favorable to feminine beauty than this mode of dressing, so close to nudity," as she told *Rester Jeune* in 1937.

Sophie Malgat modeled this dress in the château de Maisons-Lafitte for *L'Officiel* (no. 321-322, Noël 1948, p. 126). Eighteen-year-old countess Jacqueline Reille also wore this model to the charity Bal des Oiseaux organized by the Red Cross at the hôtel Castellane in November 1948, as seen in the same issue of *L'Officiel* (p. 108). An illustration of the dress appeared in *Silhouettes* (no. 227, 1948, p. 48). Grès also drafted a rough image of this dress on the front of an envelope, one of the designer's idiosyncratic sketches in the collection of the Palais Galliera (2011.20.17).

WDG


NILOUFER

SUEDE PURSE

Probably French, ca. 1934

Boldly emblazoned with the name of its owner, this handbag is a remarkable survival from the wardrobe of Nilüfer Hanimsultan (1916–1989), also known as Princess Niloufer. Its daring modernism is a fitting match for a woman who was known for her style as well as her progressive activism for women in India.

One of the last princesses of the Ottoman Empire, Niloufer—whose name means "lotus"—was born at the Göztepe Palace in Constantinople. Her mother, Adile Sultan, was a granddaughter of Sultan Murad V, and her great-grand uncle was Abdulmejid II, the last ruling Ottoman caliph. When she was eight years old, the caliphate was abolished, and she fled with her family, settling in Nice. In 1931, Abdulmejid negotiated the marriages of Niloufer and his daughter Dürrüşehvar (1914–2006) to the sons of the last ruling Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan (1886–1967). The Nizam, who ruled over the largest and richest princely state in British India, had been supporting the exiled caliph, a fellow Sunni Muslim, since his flight from Turkey. In a double ceremony on November 12, 1931, in Nice, fifteen-year-old Niloufer married Moazzam Jah, the Nizam's second eldest son, while her seventeen-year-old cousin married his elder brother. Newspapers called it the union of "the most powerful religious and financial houses of Mohammedanism."

Her status and favor with her otherwise officious father-in-law—reportedly she was the only one allowed to call him "Papa"—allowed Niloufer certain liberties, and she became a strong advocate for women's rights. Breaking with tradition, she attended public functions unveiled and was a member of the Lady Hydari Club for elite women in Hyderabad. Niloufer and her cousin also oversaw the construction of hospitals and supported women's educational reform by starting schools for orphan girls and day-care facilities for female workers. In 1953, the Niloufer Hospital for women opened in Hyderabad, offering modern medical techniques to expectant mothers.

Niloufer was just one of several royal Indian consorts whose beauty and flair with both the traditional Indian sari and haute couture made them international style icons in the second half of the 1930s. In addition to her cousin Dürrüşehvar, this coterie included Indira Devi, maharani of Cooch Behar; Sanyogita, maharani of Indore; and, most prominently, Sita Devi, the maharani of Kapurthala. Chanel, Mainbocher, Alix, and Schiaparelli all created sari-style gowns influenced by these women, and they in turn brought back couture gowns and sportswear to India, which some, like Niloufer, even dared to wear in public.

For her part, Niloufer patronized several of the most important houses in Paris: Augustabernard, Jean Patou, Molyneux, Maggy Rouff, Alix, and Hermès. By all accounts however, she preferred the sari for most formal occasions, though even these had a hybrid Franco-Indian twist; she commissioned embellished examples from Lanvin and Mainbocher but also instigated a particular trend for saris with wide Banarasi brocaded borders in India, which she had created at the house of Madhavdas in Mumbai. "I saw her in daylight wearing a sari of pink and silver brocaded metal cloth," wrote the artist Charles Baskerville in 1937, adding, "She wore two diamond clips in her hair and looked simply dazzling." Later in life, following her separation from Moazzam Jah, Niloufer dressed at Dior, Fath, and Griffe.

Constructed of cocoa brown suede, the slim body of this strikingly asymmetrical purse is architectonic in form, with two vertical rectangles abutting each other like skyscrapers. A gentle push of the lower portion of Niloufer's name opens the brass frame, revealing a brown satin interior with a floating kiss-lock change purse balanced in the center. Additional pockets conceal a double-sided makeup mirror that may once have helped Niloufer apply the dark lipstick she habitually wore in this period. The thick but supple suede-wrapped carrying handle, like the rest of the purse, shows no wear. Indeed, when a group of 1930s couture garments from the princess's wardrobe was discovered following her death in Paris in 1989, all were seemingly untouched, suggesting that these pieces enjoyed few, if any, outings. The bag is not signed, though the quality of the craftsmanship is superb, and it is surely French.

Several of Niloufer's saris, along with design drawings and related textiles, are now in the collection of the Museum at FIT and were the subject of an exhibition at the museum in 1997. The museum also holds an Augustabernard gown from Niloufer's wardrobe (2009.1.2).

11 ¼ x 7 x 2 in.

WDG

SWIMSUIT
CHRISTIAN DIOR for COLE OF CALIFORNIA
with FERNAND LÉGER'S VITRAIL PRINTED COTTON for FULLER FABRICS
American (made in Australia), 1957

Stylish swimwear was big business in mid-century America. The economic boom and the rise of a suburban lifestyle across the United States in the postwar years encompassed a dramatic increase in the number of private and public pools as well as family vacations to beach resorts. For upper- and middle-class women, leisurely hours spent poolside or at the beach provided an opportunity to show off a maillot that was intended for more than just swimming. This eye-catching swimsuit tells the story of two international collaborations: one that brought together leading figures of French couture and American ready-to-wear and the other that introduced high art into textiles produced for popular consumption.

In August 1955, *Women's Wear Daily* excitedly announced that "Dior Will Design Beach Wear Line for Cole of California," which would initially be available in the United States and Canada and subsequently "produced in Australia and New Zealand." The following January, the well-known company launched the first collection with extensive coverage in the press that included articles, advertisements, and editorial spreads in *Women's Wear Daily*, the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, and numerous regional U.S. newspapers. Cole's 1956 prediction that its Dior "fashions ... will make news all over the swimming world!" was realized in March 1957 when the *Sydney Morning Herald* informed its female readers that they would be able to "buy a Dior-designed Cole-constructed swimsuit" that summer. In July, a full-page color photograph in *The Australian Women's Weekly* advertised three of the suits that might have appeared on local beaches.

Dior's renown for emphasizing feminine curves in his highly structured garments paralleled swimwear-as-shapewear in the mid-1950s. In April 1956, the *New York Times* highlighted the couturier's "unmistakable touch" in the "raised bust, higher necklines, and expert draping" of his bathing suits. That same month, *Vogue* illustrated one of the new suits—very similar to this example—with the caption, "What Dior construction does in a dress is this: makes a figure, willy nilly. What Dior-engineered draping does for this bathing suit: ditto." Clearly aimed at the higher end of the ready-to-wear market, it retailed for a hefty forty dollars—more than twice the price for most Cole suits.

Instead of the one or two solid colors in Dior's first offerings, this suit presents a lively printed cotton by the French painter and sculptor Fernand Léger—the result of another successful transatlantic commercial venture. In its Winter 1955–56 issue, the influential trade magazine *American Fabrics* heralded the introduction of Fuller Fabrics Modern Master Prints—a line of mass-produced roller-printed cottons that sold for under two dollars per yard and that were "designed by the great artists of our time, PICASSO, MIRO, CHAGALL, LÈGER [sic] AND RAOUL DUFY." Touting "their great talent for color and design," the article proclaimed the collaboration "a brilliant contribution to the fashion world in a series of prints of rare beauty and distinction." A photograph of Dan Fuller, the president of Fuller Fabrics, and Léger with yardage of his designs, and another with a model wearing a bathing suit and holding a matching shirt by Jack Horowitz, made up in *Vitrail*, are supplemented by a swatch of the "Dip 'n Dry cotton."

Like the other designs produced for the Modern Master series, *Vitrail* was based on an existing work by Léger. In 1950, he was commissioned to create a stained-glass clerestory window for the U-shaped nave of the Church of the Sacré-Coeur in Audincourt, France, designed by the architect Maurice Novarina that same year. The seventeen windows in which abstract shapes intertwine with Christian symbols depict the story of the Passion in primary colors heavily outlined in black. Although vastly reduced in scale, *Vitrail* reproduces the motifs in one of these windows, "Pincers and Nails," that appears behind the altar.

The bathing suit's palette contrasts pale shades of blue, green, and pink with strong black outlines and a rectangular grid. Two large black buttons at the bust and a black cotton half-belt with a flat bow define the Empire waist that characterizes most of Dior's designs for Cole. The front of the suit is constructed from three shaped panels, while the elasticized ruching of the two back panels emphasizes their slight bias cut. Secured with concealed buttons at the back neckline, the straps can be worn straight over the shoulders or crisscrossed. A black-and-white woven label with "Christian Dior Paris Designed for Cole of California Made in Australia" is stitched to the white cotton jersey front lining. Although Cole of California was one of many casual- and swimwear companies to showcase the Modern Master prints, for the Dior line, these cottons were used for markets outside the United States. One of the suits pictured in *The Australian Women's Weekly* features *Parade Sauvage*, another Léger print.

Vitrail was also used for a purse by Garay, a leading New York-based manufacturer of handbags and belts. The copy in a March 1956 advertisement in *The Orlando Evening Star* emphasized the "rich, beautiful design of the modern masters, Leger [*sic*] and Picasso" and described the accessory that sold for $7.98 as "the proper feminine touch to your Easter ensemble."

The suit is very similar to one in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.57.26.12), donated by Fred Cole in 1957, along with eight other bathing and play suits and a set of drawings by Dior for the Cole line (M.57.26.1-20). Lengths of *Vitrail* in different colorways are in the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (2003-7-1) and the Victoria & Albert Museum (CIRC.438-1956).

Garay purse: 9 ½ x 12 ½ x 2 ¼ in.

MM

ROSE BOLDINI SCREEN-PRINTED COTTON VELVET
FEDE CHETI
Italian (Milan), ca. 1955–65

"It is Boldini's moment," architect-designer Gio Ponti mused in *Domus* in February 1952. The editorial appeared following the Rome exhibition of one hundred of the painter Giovanni Boldini's masterpieces and a book by his widow Emilia Cardona. It also marked a less obvious changing tide in Italian design. Articles about fine art in *Domus* remained comfortably separated from those about architecture and design, but the renewed interest in the Impressionist could be said to presage a trend in postwar Italian design that moved ever closer to art, a trend that was led by the textile designer, interior decorator, and entrepreneur Fede (Federica) Cheti (1905–1978).

From the 1930s, Cheti made a name for herself as the queen of *cinz* ("chintz" in Italian). Born in Savona in 1905 to a family involved in the textile industry, Cheti relocated in the 1920s to Milan, where she taught herself weaving and printing. She earned recognition at the 1930 Monza Biennale and, from 1936, had a decades-long string of successes in the Milan Triennali. That year, she created the *Scuola tappeta Fede Cheti* (Fede Cheti Carpet-Weaving School) at via Manzoni 21. Even in Milan's stifling rationalist (and Fascist) environment, Cheti experimented with patenting artificial and synthetic materials, expanded into other business opportunities, and, in due course, opened the door for other textile impresarios such as Luigi Grampa. Shortly after World War II, her via Manzoni premises became a gallery for up-and-coming industrial designers including the Castiglioni brothers, Vico Magistretti, and Ettore Sottsass Jr., in whose work she saw promise.

Ultimately, though, it was Cheti's floral chintzes, traditionally inspired but refreshingly modern, that made her internationally famous. Her soft, artistic patterns offset the streamlined furniture of Osvaldo Borsani, Paolo Buffa, and Ponti (see pp. 45–46). By the early 1950s, her fabrics, which retailed in the range of a hefty twenty-five dollars per yard, were marketed throughout Europe and North America and transcended furnishing with consistent advertisement in Italian and American *Vogue* as well as *Harper's Bazaar*. In London in 1960, she was invited to participate in Sanderson's centennial celebration as the only woman and only Italian present. The following year, she opened a boutique in New York, having already brought her fabrics to the United States a decade earlier through J. H. Thorp & Co. In 1965, she was awarded the Premio Città di Milano for her contributions to decorative arts. After her death in 1978, textile operations continued, and today, a small archive of original designs is preserved at the via Manzoni showroom, which now boasts of her reissued carpet designs and licensed fashion accessories.

Rose Boldini's painterly handling, vibrant palette, and enormous scale are the hallmark elements of Cheti's designs. Screen printed on plush cotton velvet, *Rose Boldini* imitates the quick, gestural brushstrokes of its namesake's canvases, transferred from salon walls to windows. Inspired by the artist's floral still lifes, it depicts an arrangement of roses and bougainvillea in hues of red, pink, yellow, and white. The flowers seem to float without shadows against a mottled earthy ground, though gravity still tugs at the drooping red roses at right. The bouquet has just passed its apex, not yet a memento mori of decay—some flower heads still reach for the sun—but suggestive of things to come. Although *Rose Boldini*'s original design does not survive, the via Manzoni archive possesses similar floral compositions in Cheti's hand dating to the mid-1950s and 1960s.

Boldini was not the only painter whose art appealed to Cheti. Her submission for the IX Triennale in 1951 was a round structure called the "Garretta," a campaign tent-cum-gazebo, with chairs and cushions upholstered in fabrics inspired by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. She also commissioned living artists such as the fashion illustrator René Gruau and the photographer and painter Jacques-Henri Lartigue. By the 1960s, she drew in other designers including Althea McNish, who was similarly praised for her artistry at a time when hard-edged op and pop art were the mainstream (see pp. 51–54).

With the rise of design history as a unique field of study, Cheti's achievements were reexamined. In July 1981, *Interiors* cited her as among the first "to use modern art as a basis for textile design." Two years later, *Architectural Digest*'s December issue called her an early adopter of "the patterns and colors of abstract painting" on fabric. Fede Cheti should rightly be remembered alongside Sweden's Astrid Sampe, the U.S.'s Wesley Simpson and Dan Fuller, and Britain's Zika Ascher and David Whitehead as having helped shape our contemporary understanding of what is known as the "artist textile." *Rose Boldini* stands as an homage not only to Italian impressionism but also to the mid-century's prescient expansion of art and design's definitions. Textiles by Cheti are in public collections including the Art Institute of Chicago; Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo, Venice; Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the RISD Museum. Other textile designs are in the Fondazione Massimo e Sonia Cirulli.

167 ¼ x 50 ½ in.

MDA

LEGGE MEDITERRANEA SCREEN-PRINTED COTTON SATIN

GIO PONTI for the MANIFATTURA JSA

Italian (Busto Arsizio), 1954

"Everything, at the beach, must be colorful." It is hard to disagree with this "Mediterranean law" scrawled at intervals along this furnishing fabric designed by Giovanni, better known as Gio, Ponti (1891–1979). Such an expansive and comprehensive oeuvre as Ponti's, spanning nearly six decades, is impossible to condense; nevertheless, core philosophies perennially appeared throughout his career. *Legge mediterranea* humorously codifies one: the architect-designer's exploration into Mediterraneanism.

After receiving his degree in architecture in 1921, Ponti opened a practice in Milan. From 1923 to 1930, he directed the Richard-Ginori porcelain factory and, from 1928, headed *Domus* magazine. Serving as editor from its inception to 1941 and again from 1948 until his death, Ponti became the de facto voice of architecture and design in Italy and, from the 1950s, internationally.

Ponti never strayed far from an inherent Italian-ness or, more broadly, Mediterranean-ness. His earliest projects combined the Novecento movement's neoclassicism with Rationalism's machine-age streamlining. From the 1930s, his buildings and editorials were as indebted to Italian vernacular structures as to Vitruvius and Palladio. He published an anthology of *Domus* writings titled *La casa all'italiana* (The Italian house, 1933), which presented Italy's architecture as distinct from that of Northern Europe for its relationship to nature and humans.

Rather than finding inspiration strictly in his setting, though, Ponti looked to a fellow architect who was, in fact, a transplant from Northern Europe: "The Mediterranean taught [Bernard] Rudofsky, Rudofsky taught me." These often-quoted words, from *Aria d'Italia: Espressione di Gio Ponti* (1954), encapsulate the feeling infused in Ponti's architecture and interiors after his initial encounters with Rudofsky. In 1937, Ponti welcomed the Austrian-born architect, a resident of Campania since 1932, as a *Domus* contributor. They collaborated on a series of projects, including an unrealized plan for a hotel on Capri (1938), and their relationship continued until Ponti's death. Rudofsky championed new modes of living that emphasized social, cultural, and environmental factors. By adopting this sociologically aware approach, Ponti saw the future of architecture as guided by lifestyle and rooted in the Mediterranean past and present.

This fabric vivifies Ponti's "law" through both its vibrant composition and technical innovation. Four faceless figures in dresses and headscarves stand alongside umbrellas, beach mats, boats, life preservers, oars, and changing rooms that hint at Italy's classical past via pared-down Ionic columns. The design was printed using as many as fourteen screens in at least eleven colors, not including hues created by layering, on the luxe sateen favored by the high-end textile firm Jsa, located in the cotton capital of Busto Arsizio, near Milan.

Although neither the first nor last partnership between Ponti and the Jsa founder Luigi Grampa, *Legge mediterranea* provided the basis for an entire collection of fabrics. Ponti had dreamed up its motifs as early as 1939 when, in *Domus*, he drew a multicolored typographic mosaic on the floor of his *piccola casa ideale* and its inhabitant's skirt. That same year, his cover art for the magazine *Aria d'Italia* featured color-blocked fish, vases, suns, stars, and anchors with the phrase *Estate mediterranea* (Mediterranean Summer). Ponti reused all these elements for the present figures' garments and Jsa's eponymous companion fabric in 1957. A third textile, also called *Estate mediterranea*, embodies Ponti's so-called *Porte stampate* (Printed Doors), intended to convert a door's bland, monochromatic surface into a work of art.

Legge mediterranea's composition first appeared in his multidisciplinary, multimedia, and multilingual manifesto *Espressione di Gio Ponti*, the final issue of *Aria d'Italia*, published in 1954. For the magazine's one-time reprise, its editor Daria Guarnati handed all art direction to Ponti. His working designs for the layout survive, among them a watercolor and gouache drawing of two of *Legge*'s four figures, now in the U.K.'s Drawing Matter Collection (DMC 2021). The handwritten word *profezia* (prophecy) at lower right suggests grand plans; that it became "law" in print is perhaps more telling, given Ponti's surging international fame. Indeed, 1954 marked the completion of Ponti's first building in Venezuela and his first U.S. retrospective, organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. (The ICA's director, James Plaut, also wrote the forward to *Espressione*.) Touring institutions included the Cranbrook Art Museum, where a curtain of *Legge mediterranea* was featured, bringing a taste of Mediterraneanism to the Midwest's Scandinavian creative hotbed.

A sample of *Legge mediterranea* is in the Archivio Gio Ponti, CSAC, Parma.

89 ½ x 53 ½ in.

MDA

***CONCOURSE*, *CARAVAN*, *NEW LEAF*, AND *RIBBONS* SCREEN-PRINTED FABRICS**

BEN ROSE

American (Chicago), 1948–53

Following a path wending through professional poster silk-screening, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, military service, marriage, and Midshipman School at Northwestern University, Ben Rose (1916–2004) finally found himself in the textile business. The impetus for Ben Rose, Inc. sparked from a series of table mats Rose printed to give as Christmas presents; his ease with the silk-screen process stemmed from employment at his brother's poster-printing business in Chicago. There, between 1936 and 1939, Rose learned to cut screens, design content, and execute hand screen-printing. It wasn't until after his 1942 marriage to his art-school classmate, Frances Landram, and his 1945 tour of duty as a naval officer in Okinawa, that Rose's handmade Christmas gift led to a lucrative 3,000-yard commission. As the couple scrambled to find a makeshift studio to print the colossal order, more requests came in, giving them hope that they could parlay initial success into a sustainable fabric and wallpaper business.

In 1946, the Roses officially incorporated as Ben Rose, Inc., with Frances serving as the company's inaugural salesperson. The first couple of years were not without problems, however. In late 1947, Benrose Fabrics Corp. of New York filed suit against Benjamin and Frances Rosenstein for alleged trademark infringement by changing their surname to "Rose." *Women's Wear Daily* reported in December that the couple was seeking a dismissal, which was later granted:

> Ben and Frances Rose deny that trade name "Benrose" has acquired a national or international position, and deny the word "Benrose" is a trade name or trademark. Defendants aver they believe plaintiff has been engaged in manufacturing fabrics used exclusively for apparel. They state they are now trading as "Ben Rose" and their business is limited exclusively to individual designing and printing of designs on fabrics used only in the home furnishings business for draperies and furniture coverings. They deny that their business is in any manner competitive with that of the plaintiff. Ben Rose avers he abandoned the name Benjamin Rosenstein and adopted Ben Rose for all purposes in 1938, and that the name was legally changed in January 1947.

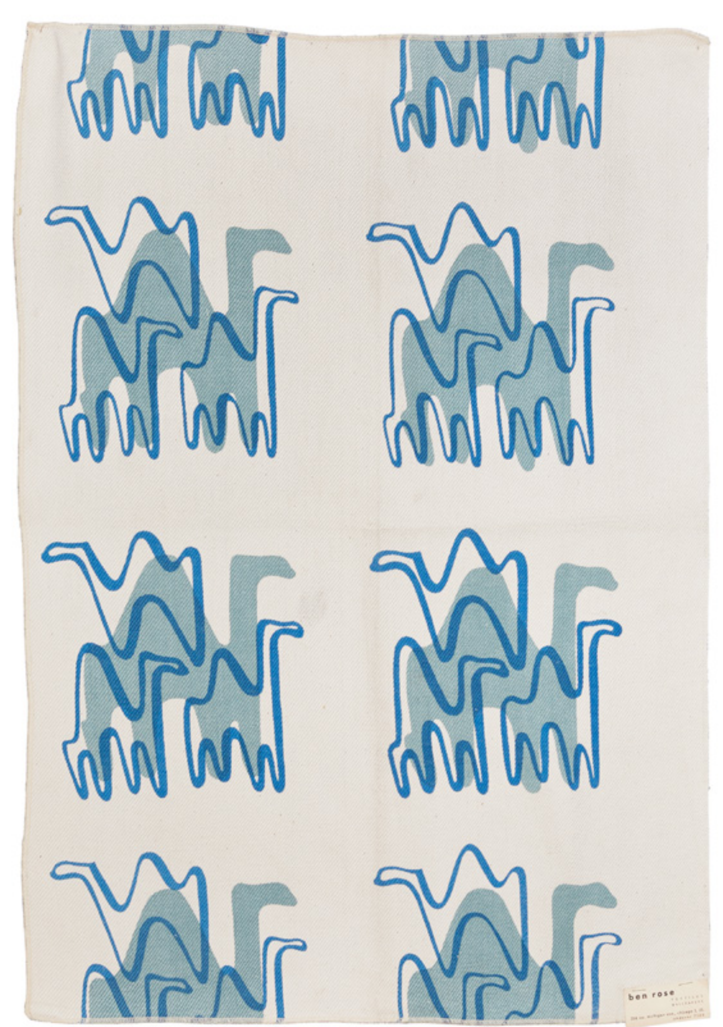
Despite this bump in the road, the Roses sought to expand their fledgling company but couldn't achieve it alone. Early on, they brought in Helen Stern, a friend of Frances's who specialized in architecture and retail displays. After the birth of their first child in 1947, Frances ceased daily responsibilities for the firm, and they made Stern a one-third partner in 1949 or early 1950. As the *Chicago Tribune* described in a 1956 profile on Rose, "Ben is a pleasant, rather modest person who insists that his partner, Helen Stern, provides the brains to balance his dreams in their successful enterprise." Stern handled marketing, showroom designs, and helped select colors for the printed patterns until her death in 1985. Both credited the dye chemist Mario Aguilar with the wizardry in developing their distinctive palettes; Rose had employed Aguilar's son, Ruben, until he surreptitiously left to work for the fellow Chicagoan Angelo Testa.

These showroom samples demonstrate Rose's facility with both figural and abstract motifs. Rose stressed architectonic qualities through clean, simple abstractions but just as frequently lost himself in quasi-realistic reveries. *New Leaf* and *Caravan* take a reductive tack on physicality; each relies on minimal screens and colors on neutral twill-weave grounds. The subtle wittiness of Rose's pattern titles can't be overlooked, especially in *Caravan*, where each layered block of wavy blue and sea-foam contours reveals a camel family in search of an oasis. *Concourse*, printed on basket-weave cotton, is a linear pattern with organic tendencies: small bundles of stone-colored strands are clustered purposefully, overlapping on occasion with a much larger configuration in soft blue. Attached tags noting the 314 North Michigan Avenue showroom address the business occupied between 1948 and 1953 help to date the three smaller samples; *Ribbons*, a frenetic tangle of grayed-teal and mustard strips on a greige ground, is likely from this same early 1950s period in which Rose's fabrics were selected for the Chicago Merchandise Mart and the Museum of Modern Art *Good Design* joint exhibitions.

The company's fruitful, early years included orders for General Motors, Ford, and Packard (for whom Rose developed "personality prints" on linen upholstery for select 1954 automobiles); Marshall Field's department store; universities; and a bevy of interior decorators. Rose was an early adopter of color psychology in office spaces and hospitals, urging deliberate shade selection to stimulate productivity, or promote restfulness and healing. Numerous accolades and awards accumulated for Rose throughout his almost five-decade career, up until he sold the rights to his business in 1994. His textiles are found in prestigious twentieth-century design collections such as the Art Institute of Chicago and the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

Concourse: 34 ½ x 25 in. *New Leaf*: 35 ½ x 24 ½ in.
Caravan: 34 ½ x 25 in. *Ribbons*: 75 ½ x 50 ½ in.

LW


ben rose

ben rose

"ribbons" hand print by ben rose –

"ribbons" hand print by ben rose –

GILIA AND *GOLDEN HARVEST* SCREEN-PRINTED COTTONS

ALTHEA McNISH for HULL TRADERS, LTD.

British, 1959 and 1960

Matisse, Van Gogh, Gauguin … and McNish. While the former names flow from art historian's lips with ease, the latter, Althea McNish (1924–2020), is gaining traction in the twenty-first century. McNish admired these titans and was, in her own right, as accomplished an artist and colorist. These two fabrics, depicting elements of the natural world as filtered through McNish's tropical kaleidoscope, are foundational examples of the daring brilliance that defines her work.

A descendent of formerly enslaved Africans, McNish was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad; both parents nourished her artistic talent from an early age. In 1951, the McNish family moved to London where their daughter pursued her passions, first at the London School of Printing and Graphic Arts. While there, she learned of a textile screen-printing class offered by Edouardo Paolozzi at the Central School of Arts and Crafts; from her work in his night classes, Paolozzi sensed McNish's aptitude for print design and steered her toward it. She took his advice, and on winning a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, from which she graduated in 1957, McNish switched focus from graphic design to printed textiles.

With a painterly style rendered in brash, hot colors, McNish's patterns stood apart from the geometric abstractions and op art direction her British peers took, and the high-fashion fabric firms Liberty and Ascher started purchasing her designs immediately postgraduation. Among those produced by Ascher in 1959 was *Tropique*, a pattern so large that one repeat was about the length of a dress—reverberating with the then-current trend for making furnishing fabrics with sizable repeats into garments. As the 1960s progressed, McNish's fabrics found their ways into French couture collections by Dior and Lanvin as well as era-defining looks by British youthquakers Mary Quant and Biba. The British companies Edinburgh Weavers and Heal's produced her designs as well, but it was with Hull Traders Ltd. that McNish had her most fruitful professional relationship.

Golden Harvest (designed in 1959) and *Gilia* (designed in 1960) were both produced as part of Hull Traders' "Time Present" collection of modern-leaning furnishing fabrics. The attenuated, scratchy black motifs in *Golden Harvest* are sheaves of wheat McNish observed on a stay in the Essex countryside, tropicalizing the vista in rich gold and amber lightly sprinkled with vivid magenta. Tofos Prints was first to manufacture this design as yardage commissioned by an architectural firm from then-student McNish, but in 1959, it was incorporated into Hull Traders' repertoire where it proved so commercially successful it remained in production until the mid-1970s.

Gilia depicts, in McNish's loose style, a tangled bramble of gilia, a summer-blooming plant of the phlox family native to temperate and tropical regions of the Americas. McNish excelled in translating her expressive brushstrokes in a vibrant range of colors into pulsating patterns; surprisingly, part of this achievement was born of her father's occupation as a pharmacist. In her Trinidadian youth, McNish helped compound medicines for pharmacy clientele, a skill that she later employed in preparing emulsions for screen-printing. Evidence of one such solution—a chemical resist that blocked pigment—is seen in *Gilia* where the gesture of her brush is preserved in splotch-marked streaks. The print's clearest colors—turquoise, lime, rust, apricot, and a springy pea green—represent the five screens used to print on a white sateen ground. In composing the palette, McNish also demonstrated her grasp of fall-on, the printing technique by which additional colors are intentionally created by layering. Mahogany, emerald, and olive tones created through this economical process add density and intrigue to the glowing hues.

In describing the "Time Present" autumn collection in 1960, a journalist highlighted what set McNish apart: "Her designs are in the rich, tropical colours of her native West Indies and have enormous vitality … and a gaiety which one hopes against hope she will be able to maintain in the face of our saddening climate" (*The Guardian*, October 26, 1960). Her mastery of color is, perhaps, her most impactful contribution to the printed-textile landscape of the era. Uninhibited and unorthodox in her mind's eye, McNish broadcasted ripples of pulsing, Afro-Caribbean color into London's creative hive—peers who were primed for change followed her lead, heedless of rules regarding "good taste." McNish handily proved such notions irrelevant.

The Victoria & Albert Museum has lengths of both designs, in different colorways, in their collection (T.177-1989 & T.178-1989). McNish's textiles are also in the collections of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; Goldsmiths, University of London; Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture; Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the Whitworth Art Gallery, the University of Manchester.

Gilia: 58 x 50 ½ in.

Golden Harvest: 76 ¼ x 49 ½ in.

LW

S Ltd.

Hand Printed by HULL TRADERS Ltd.

GOLDEN HARVEST designed by ALTHEA McNISH
A TIME PRESENT FABRIC
shrunk, washable
TOP
GOLDEN HARVEST

PRINTED RAYON ENSEMBLE

MADAME WILLI POSEY

American (Harlem, New York), ca. 1970

"When I was a kid, I always thought my mother's work was way out. She never looked around to see if others were doing this or that before she went ahead and did it. She was an original. She was so far out she never came back in." —Faith Ringgold, *Morning News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA), December 13, 1992

"Black is beautiful" was more than a catchy slogan in the 1960s: it was a sociopolitical rallying cry for Black Americans to embrace the natural beauty stemming from their African ancestry. This countercultural flex was, not surprisingly, exuberantly expressed in the arena of sartorial styling. Black-owned businesses catered to community needs by supplying imported African garments and accessories; others purchased African fabrics to sew their own fashions, or turned to dressmakers for unique creations reflecting cultural pride. This ensemble, made by Madame Willi Posey (1903–1981) on the cusp of the 1970s, is a prime example of this synergy between prevailing Black attitudes toward beauty, Black feminism, and respect for legacy. At the same time, it highlights the exploitation of exoticism in fashions and textiles of the era.

Powerful threads almost literally connect the generations of Willi Posey's family. Posey's enslaved grandmother Susie Shannon (1812–1912), a quilter, dressmaker, and possibly also a weaver, taught her daughter, Ida Matilda "Betsy" Bingham (1850–1926) to quilt and sew; in keeping with the family heritage, Posey passed these skills to her daughter, the famed artist Faith Ringgold (b. 1930). Posey had three children with Andrew Louis Jones Sr.; the couple separated in the 1930s, finalizing their divorce in 1942. By this time, she was working as a seamstress in Manhattan's garment district, even contributing to the war effort by sewing jackets for the army. Sometime in the late 1940s to early 1950s, Posey attended the newly formed Fashion Institute of Technology and opened a modest dressmaking business out of her Edgecomb Avenue apartment in Harlem. Billing herself as Madame Willi Posey, she emphasized the bespoke nature of her establishment by adding *couture*—a word imbued with prestige and exclusivity—to her business card. Posey staged fashion shows in her community and participated in charity events; she was also a member of the Manhattan chapter of the National Association of Fashion and Accessory Designers, the National Council of Negro Women, and the National Association of Business and Professional Women.

Photographs of Posey's work through the 1950s and 1960s document bridal wear, cocktail dresses, and svelte evening gowns with panache. These particular coordinates—a flaring, long-sleeved tunic and wide-legged pants—point toward new, liberated directions in feminine attire in which pants and pantsuits became de rigeur. Posey's attention to detail is evident in the squared neckline, softly rounded by darts culminating in subtle tucks, hand finishing on the self-faced tunic cuffs and the pant hems, and overall impeccable simplicity. Muslin lining in the pants—up to the hips—gives the legs substance and enhance the drape. Each piece bears a custom label that reads: "Mme. Willi Posey/Couture/Fashion Designer."

Posey's choice of a sleek silhouette allows the textile to do much of the communicating. Mellow golden foliage blurs the boundaries between tawny leopards and dazzling zebras—both African creatures that rely on disruptive natural patterning to survive life on the savannah. The explicit connection to Africa here is paramount, signifying the rootedness of Posey's look in the birthplace of Black civilization; however, it also points to a broader trend for African themes in fashion reliant on Western notions of primitivism and exoticism. In a blatant commodification of Africanness, provocative words and phrases such as "tribal," "going native," "savage," and "on safari" were commonly used in descriptions of prints in the late 1960s. It seems likely the fabric Posey used here dates to 1967–68; *American Fabrics* magazine identified "wild prints," characterized by collaged animal forms and vegetation, as a trend in their Winter-Spring 1967 issue, while press around Marc Bohan's Spring/Summer 1967 Dior collection, which incorporated zebra and leopard prints, touted "the white hunter look with the chic of the African native" ("Dior Gives a Lion's Share of African Fashion Ideas," *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 1967). Despite the superficial, mainstream fad of African inspiration, Black fashion leaders bent the arc of cultural appropriation toward their own purpose, as Posey did by using this printed rayon.

Starting in the early 1970s and up until her death in 1981, Posey collaborated with her daughter on textile-based feminist artworks. She sewed opulent, brocaded borders on Ringgold's 1972 *Slave Rape* series of Tibetan-inspired "tanka" paintings, helped piece together story quilts, and also stitched clothing for figural sculptures. Though it is unknown for whom Posey made this ensemble, period photographs of her granddaughter, the author and cultural critic Michele Wallace (b. 1952), document her wearing an identical, though sleeveless, ensemble ca. 1970, and again in 1972 modeling a mini-sheath dress in this fabric.

LW

WOVEN CURTAIN PANEL

MARIA KIPP

American (California), ca. 1958

As influential as Maria Kipp (1900–1988) was, her life's work is a mere whisper in the canon of modernist textile design. She may have been overshadowed by the public acclaim for brilliant colorist and industry innovator Dorothy Liebes, the peer to whom Kipp is most often compared. But Kipp purposefully remained in the background; her commitment to artisanal-scale weaving was steadfast, and period accounts of Kipp's modus operandi note the lack of fanfare with which she conducted business. Kipp's spare aesthetics and command of structuring complex weaves, however, made her a trusted supplier for a cadre of architects and interior decorators.

Born in Germany, Kipp studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts) in Munich between 1918 and 1920, and again briefly between 1923 and 1924. In 1920, she enrolled at the Staatliche Höhere Fachschule für Textilindustrie (State Academy for the Textile Industry) in Bavaria to study textile engineering. Kipp was the first woman to attend the school since its founding in 1854 and was met with resistance in this male-dominated environment. After completing her degree, she returned to the Kunstgewerbeschule briefly as she contemplated professional options. Business in Germany was brief as Kipp and her then-husband, Ernst Haeckel, moved to Los Angeles in 1924—a move not prompted by the promise of a like-minded modern design community but to relocate to the world headquarters of the Mazdaznan (neo-Zoroastrian) movement. This uprooting would prove fortuitous, landing Kipp in an epicenter of modern architecture and experimental design.

Beginning in the 1920s and lasting well into the prosperous, post-World War II period, Los Angeles experienced an economic boom: oil, aviation, automobile, and motion picture industries attracted innovators, many of whom were European émigrés working in the arts. A 1926 commission from the progressive architect Rudolph Schindler was the earliest feather in Kipp's cap: custom-dyed draperies, bedspreads, and upholstery yardage for the Lovell Beach House. Schindler remained a client for twenty-five years; other early, high-profile commissions included those for Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House and the Los Angeles City Hall as well as the San Francisco Stock Exchange. Will Rogers was the first celebrity to install Kipp draperies in his home; eventually, her fabrics graced the residences of Hollywood players including Walt Disney, Rita Hayworth, Bob Hope, and Louis B. Mayer. The local architects and decorators Richard Neutra, Paul Revere Williams, Paul Frankl, and Harold Grieve turned to Kipp for their projects, as did hoteliers, civic centers, and department stores; farther-flung commissions came from the Maharaja of Indor in India and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia.

This panel captures the essence of Kipp's weaving style: natural tones in linear arrangements that follow the weave structure's dictate. Steely blue, muted spruce, and yellow towers formed by supplementary warp floats rise above a golden horizon; in the weft direction, creamy white bouclé threads give way to rusty red before bottoming out in plush cotton chenille. In a 1953 article titled "Fabrics Created in California," *The San Francisco Examiner* describes two Kipp textiles that exhibit qualities found in this example: "One shows how she sometimes carries clusters of yarn over the surface of a textile to give it almost a three-dimensional quality. Another shows how yarns of different patterns are combined to achieve not only pattern but also surface texture." Throughout this panel, Kipp used shiny rayon yarns plied with matte cotton yarns, dyed to identical shades in-house, to impart texture and dimension; the hazy zone dilutes pure red wefts with the shiny, straw-colored warps as well as with an occasional white bouclé weft. Details such as the immaculately choreographed intervals of warp-float binding, and the tiny, tone-on-tone squares dissipating into the chenille from each skyscraper-like pattern, show the sensitivity of a weaver's mind. Even the lustrous, flaxen-colored warps peeping through the chenille wefts add a sparkling element that Kipp devotees appreciated.

Kipp was clear about her ambitions: "We are not competing with anyone ... We do not solicit business, for in so doing we would have to expand and become big, and then we would lose touch with our individual fabrics and designs. We would lose the personal touch now existing among us all, and production would overshadow craftsmanship" ("The Looms of Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1951). The welfare of her staff and the satisfying relationships she cultivated with other designers were paramount; Kipp only advertised once in her career, seldom exhibited, and kept to her craft. This focused dedication to her practice has been an unwitting participant in her relative obscurity but allows us to reappraise Kipp as a quiet shaper of modern design in our present moment.

An identical panel to this design was sold at Christie's in November 2007 and Heritage Auctions in 2021. Related designs are in the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (1959-67-5); the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (AC1999.91.1); and the Museum of Modern Art (163.2012).

80 x 44 in.

LW

DIET
SLIM
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BEST
333
IN
OUT
Michael O'Connell

VIP333 HANGING

MICHAEL O'CONNELL

British, 1964

In his studio in the English countryside, among bottles, brushes, and vats, Michael O'Connell (1898–1976) was a master of dyeing cloth. Like numerous designers whose pursuits in textiles provided them with some degree of success through the decades of the twentieth century—O'Connell worked in Australia in the 1930s and in Great Britain from the 1940s to the 1970s—today their names and achievements are often forgotten. Michael O'Connell is one of those names.

Over those decades, O'Connell's textiles hung as curtains and decorated the walls of offices and restaurants; the sophisticated iconography of his designs was also translated into fabrics for dresses and scarves. His work appeared in magazines such as *Home*, *Decoration*, and *Studio* and in various books. In *Textiles by Britain* (1948), by Grace Lovat Fraser, an alphabetical list of a hundred "Leading British Textile Designers" includes "Michael O'Connell" after "Ben Nicholson." Stuart Robinson's *A History of Printed Textiles* (1969) lists O'Connell along with Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell, Marion Dorn, and others as "well-known artists" who crafted screen prints for British manufacturers; O'Connell's 1938 design *Torrs* for Edinburgh Weavers is illustrated. And O'Connell is mentioned in Robinson's *A History of Dyed Textiles* (1969) as one of four British designers using batik to make large hangings. The publication of Harriet Edquist's *Michael O'Connell: The Lost Modernist* in 2011, along with exhibitions of his textiles that followed, mark a belated resurgence following O'Connell's death in 1976.

Born in Lancashire, England, in 1898, O'Connell immigrated to Australia in 1920, settling in Melbourne and becoming an active member of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria. O'Connell's artistic output then consisted of photographs, watercolors, interior design, and concrete garden sculptures and furniture before he shifted to making block-printed textiles in 1930. *Pandemonium*, made from linocut and woodblock on silk and composed of twelve joined panels, and exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Society's exhibition that year, was considered enough of a success that O'Connell pursued the medium of textiles.

O'Connell returned to England in 1937, with his wife, Ella, a fellow member in the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria, where he set up to design textiles for screen and block printing. The following year, according to Edquist, "he exhibited with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at Burlington House and at the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition." Over his career, O'Connell produced patterns for Edinburgh Weavers, had a long-standing relationship with Heal's, and garnered numerous private commissions. Through this period, O'Connell developed his resist-dyeing skills: patterns for panels and hangings were first drawn on paper, the pattern was transferred to the cloth by pouncing, then the dyeing process was done with mordants and resists before going into dyebaths. O'Connell also sometimes hand painted dyes onto the cloth for small concentrations of color.

For the 1951 Festival of Britain's Country Pavilion, O'Connell was commissioned to create a mural, with the result being *Variety of British Farming*. This monumental block-printed and resist-dyed textile was made in sections with the final work measuring 3.8 meters high by 50 meters long (12 by 164 feet). Its success led to other commissions during the 1950s for both private clients and commercial spaces.

During the 1960s, O'Connell was conceiving a fresh approach to his textile designs; his life in the country interacted with the vibrant 1960s London art scene. Edquist writes that he "began to use his walks through the grittier parts of London as sources of inspiration, and developed a new form of abstraction where fragments of his vocabulary were meshed with contemporary imagery." O'Connell stated that he was "developing the new concept now made rather more specific and present age by abstract letter forms and pieces."

One manifestation of this new style is *VIP333*, in which words and fragments of words appear: VIP, SEE, BEST, SLIM, DIET, BEST, LEFT, IN, OUT. In *VIP333* as well as others from this period, O'Connell adds layered elements in the form of small patches of color and patterns. "O'Connell tentatively experimented with a new approach to the textile [*VIP333*], appliquéing patches of colour onto the surface to draw attention to its materiality and facture as textile—a kind of 'fabric collage,'" states Edquist.

Whether O'Connell cast his eye to the past—Anglo-Saxon coins, tapa cloths, African masks—or to his contemporaneous surroundings—works by Robert Rauschenberg and other artists, electronics components, the London streetscape—the results always substantiated O'Connell's world and encapsulated his considerable talents.

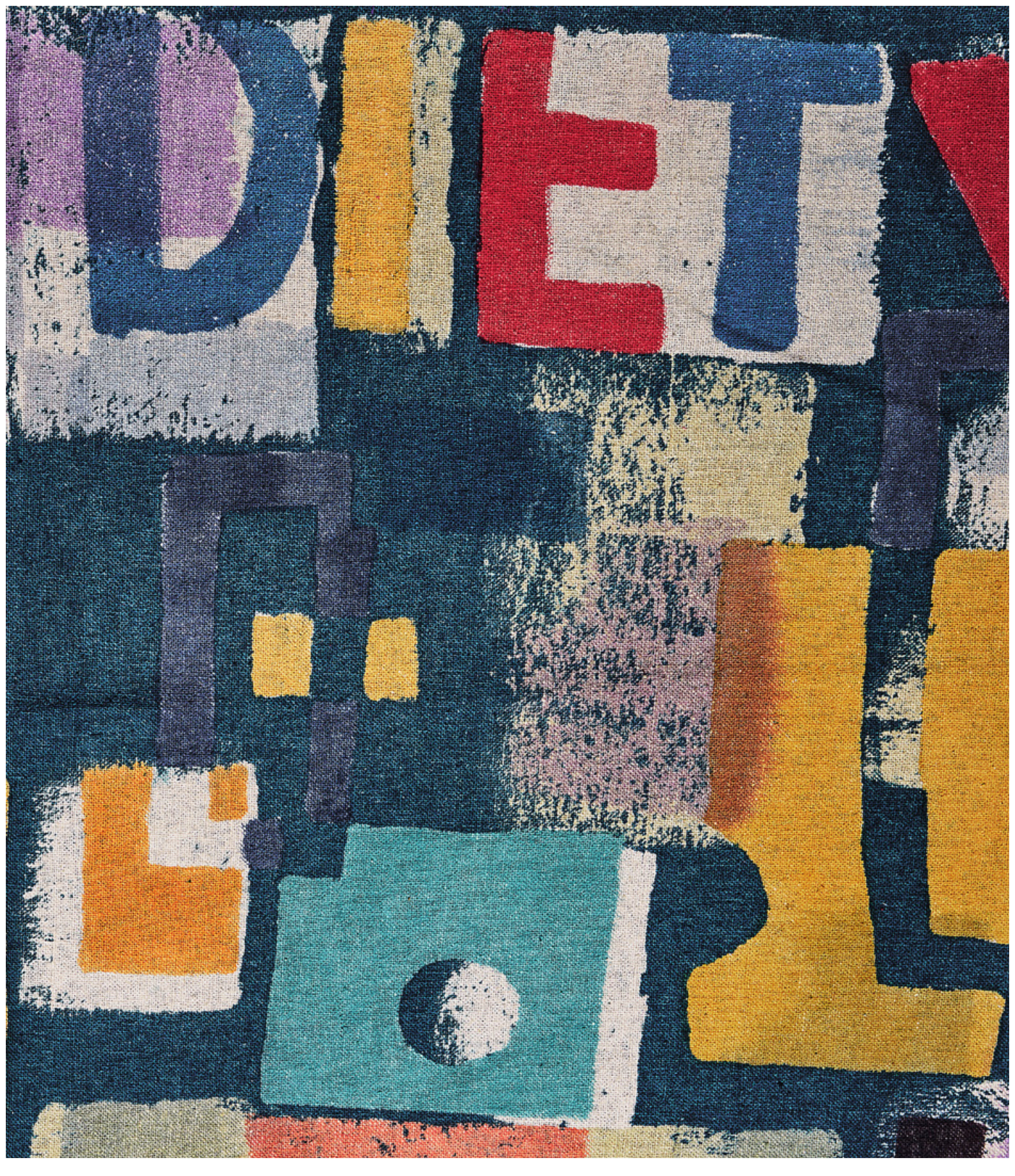
In 2013, the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, held the exhibition *Textiles of Michael O'Connell* and the same

year in the U.K., Gallery Gibberd, Harlow, presented the Michael O'Connell retrospective, *The Lost Modernist*.

Textiles by Michael O'Connell are in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; and the Museum of English Rural Life, which houses O'Connell's Festival of Britain hanging.

59 x 100 in.

DG



BOWS SCREEN-PRINTED LINEN

JOSEF FRANK for ALMEDAHLS

Swedish, ca. 1929 (printed ca. 1960)

Josef Frank (1885–1967) is a familiar name to those steeped in twentieth-century design: architect, interior designer, maker of furniture and home decor, and a textile designer with lasting influence. Though undeniably a modernist, Frank flirted more overtly with the past than his peers. His grounding in classical and Renaissance architecture, which he studied at the Vienna Technische Hochschule (Polytechnic Institute), provided him with the fundamental building blocks from which antique buildings had been created. Just as important, his education taught him that only this baseline knowledge would allow designers to rework—but not imitate—historical ideas. *Bows*, Frank's design from 1929, which was revisited in the early 1960s, represents this reassuring continuity in his lifelong commitment to making modern style something to live with, warmly.

Coherent and regular, but not perfect or predictable, *Bows* is unlike most of Frank's patterns for printed fabrics. Grand, meandering floral designs in the vein of William Morris (one of his most influential forebears) predominate in his oeuvre—rarely do geometric forms take center stage. This design may seem to align with the tightly harnessed impulses of Secessionist and Jugendstil aesthetics of his professional milieu in Vienna, but, in reality, may stem directly from his architectural concepts. *Bows* was first conceived as a hand-knotted carpet design for the home furnishings business Haus & Garten, which Frank cofounded with Oskar Wlach and Walter Sobotka in 1925. In considering a carpet's function, Frank deliberately underscored connections to terra firma and opted for energetic schemes overtly or subtly referencing tile work, parquetry, and masonry. This is one of Frank's patterns plucked from the floors of various structures; in perusing the elevation plans for many homes he designed in the 1920s and '30s, paved courtyards with irregular stones and checkered floors are consistent features. In later architectural designs, these checkerboard tiles, fieldstones, and boulder details migrate to exterior walls. As *traditional* was not pejorative in Frank's vocabulary, it is satisfying to see the essential through line bridging his view of modernity and the spirit of ancient Greek and Roman mosaic floors, as well as the Renaissance marble terrazzo paving inspired by these classical prototypes.

A circa 1933 watercolor study for this carpet with color notations in the Universitat fur angewandte Kunst, Vienna, collection documents a subtle palette enlivened with warm, bright accents. It should be presumed that the carpet based on this pattern pictured in a 1932–33 black-and-white photograph of a Haus & Garten interior, published in the journal *Innen-Dekoration* 44 (1933), generally followed the same colorway. This screen-printed linen panel of *Bows*, produced by the Swedish textile firm Almedahls, hews to similar colorations and fuses the carpet's discrete pattern into a seamless repeat. Giving the pattern its title is a section of imbricated arch motifs, followed by an orderly procession of paved lozenges, triangles, diamonds, rectangles, and wedge-circles marching across the canvas's surface. Shades of green, khaki, slate, and blue—with the same pumpkin, ocher, and orchid-purple punctuations as the watercolor—are in sync with those popular in 1960s interiors. Midnight blue is sprinkled judiciously in the pattern, amplifying the natural variation Frank believed was paramount in restful, pleasing interiors. Cloisonned areas of gravel-like patterning and miniature checkered strips recall the courtyards and Viennese flooring that peppered his architectural work.

That Almedahls chose to adapt a pattern created decades earlier underscores the timelessness of Frank's work. The firm produced *Bows* as a carpet in 1999, and still produces printed yardage, though updated with more contemporary colorways; what transcends is the classical balance central to the polymath designer's philosophy. As Frank wrote in his book of essays, *Architektur als Symbol*: "Every architectural revolution and renaissance has had the goal of finding its way back to classical antiquity after some detour. It is also that way in our time, and we will move toward a classicism until the dynamic spirits have been appeased."

Originally a pair, the matching curtain to this example is in the collection of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (2011-41-2).

116 x 51 ¼ in.

LW

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