



# THE FABRIC OF CULTURES

Fashion, Identity  
Globalization

THE GODWIN-TERNBACH MUSEUM  
AT QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY



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Globalization

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Front cover: Detail from Chinese Women's Robe, Queens College Costume Collection

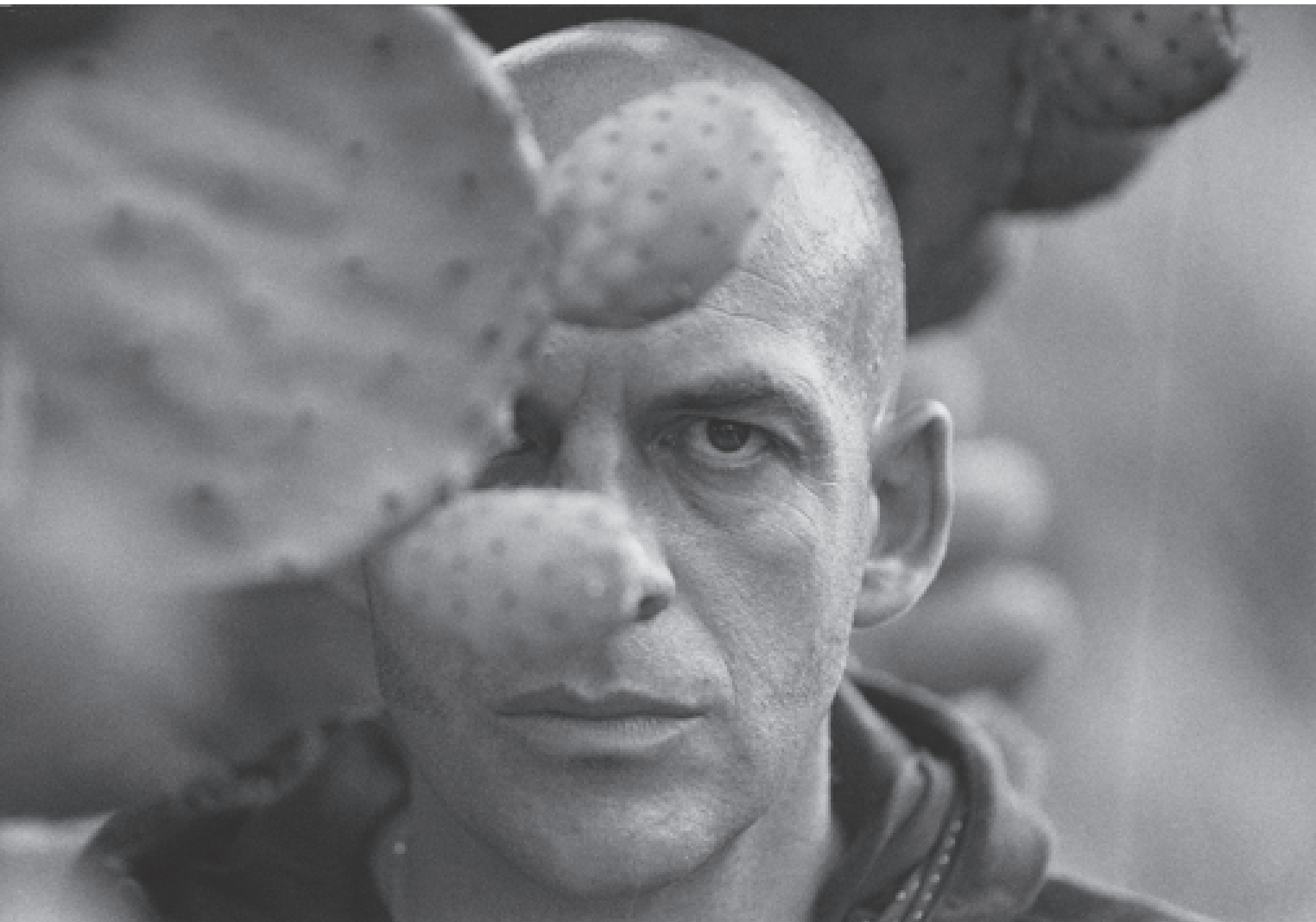
# The Poetry of Dress

Robert Herrick (British, 1591–1674)

*A sweet disorder in the dress  
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:  
A lawn about the shoulders thrown  
Into a fine distraction,  
An erring lace, which here and there  
Enthrals the crimson stomacher,  
A cuff neglectful, and thereby  
Ribbands to flow confusedly,  
A winning wave, deserving note,  
In the tempestuous petticoat,  
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie  
I see a wild civility,  
Do more bewitch me, than when art  
Is too precise in every part.*

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Portrait of Antonio Marras

# Foreword

Antonio Marras

When you come from an island, like myself, you soon learn the difference between “here” and “somewhere else.” An island is a piece of earth surrounded by the sea. The sea is both a way to travel and a border.

Border can be a limit, as well as an opportunity.

A line that cuts and divides, but also the place where things meet. A separation, but also a rule with which to come to grips, to know, interpret, understand, absorb.

The border is a state of mind, the extreme point of thought that always poses a challenge: respect it or cross it? Admit impossibility or transform it in the deep regions of change?

I was born on an island like Sardinia that has always clung to its own specificities, inside that morphologically and geologically distinct place, raised in an enclave, Alghero, where we speak Catalan language, I have made the “border” into my thrust toward freedom of thought and taste. Because I experience, in spite of my decision to stay in Sardinia, a condition of exile, spread through the many cities where I spend time in my work as a fashion designer, along with that emotion that always catches me, as if I felt sorrow for having left something or someone behind, not knowing how or where they are. With that desire to return that grips you even before going beyond places, beyond childhood memories, beyond the sea that dares you to cross it, and the distances that always replenish themselves.

Time, gender, use are also borders to be crossed time and time again, digressing from everyday objects to give them a new life, another chance that honors the memory of those who have lived before us, through their personal things. A creative process where nothing is destroyed and everything is re-created, taking on new forms and new beauty in a *détournement* that reflects the fluid character of the contemporary that transforms objects, making them live and live again, emblems both of those who made them and those who use them. Going beyond the border could mean to go beyond any distinction between handicrafts and industry, male and female: my first collection was made of redesigned garments that came from the wardrobe of my uncle who moved to America. To go beyond the norm, to invent a new rule that implies rejecting all pre-set things, asserting the ideal of beauty of our historical moment. In which things roughly crafted, dyed and embroidered, in a word imperfect, become symbols of quality. Imperfection means a lack and lack suggests expectation. The edge without a hem awaits a hand to finish it. Imperfection doesn’t let you forget it: it’s a slap in the face of our mentality, it triggers cognitive dissonance. If there were no cognitive dissonances, if everything were to happen according to predictable rules, if that hem had been finished and we could finally forget about it, then there would be no reason to continue thinking. To learn to think in a new way. We tend to find imperfection intolerable, and this is precisely its strength: in the attempt to justify it, to close it, to bring it back into the realm of the well made, we are forced to invent new solutions. The new never comes from perfection. The new comes from holes, cuts, emptiness, from a lack that prevents the mind from finding rest.

*Chi, come me, nasce su un'isola impara fin da piccolo la differenza tra il "qui" e "l'altrove". L'isola è una terra con il mare tutto intorno. Il mare è una via per viaggiare o un confine.*

*Il confine è un limite, ma è anche una possibilità. Una linea che taglia e divide, ma anche un'occasione d'incontro. Una separazione, ma anche una regola con cui confrontarsi, da conoscere, interpretare, capire, assimilare.*

*Il confine è uno stato mentale, è il punto estremo del pensiero che ogni volta pone una sfida: arrendersi o superarlo? Riconoscerne l'impossibilità o trasformarlo nella regione profonda del cambiamento?*

*Nato in un'isola che ha sempre coltivato le proprie particolarità come la Sardegna, e all'interno della Sardegna morfologicamente e geologicamente diversa, cresciuto in una enclave che parla catalano come Alghero, ho fatto del "confine" la mia spinta verso una libertà di pensiero e di gusto. Perché sperimento dentro di me, pur avendo deciso di restare in Sardegna, la condizione dell'esule, diviso tra molte città dove mi chiama il lavoro di fashion designer, e insieme quell'emozione che sempre mi prende come se provassi dolore per avere lasciato qualcosa e qualcuno che non so bene come e dove sia. Con quella voglia di tornare che prende già prima di andare oltre i luoghi, oltre le memorie dell'infanzia, oltre il mare che ti sfida a superarlo e le distanze che sempre si rinnovano.*

*Anche il tempo, il genere, l'uso sono confini da oltrepassare ogni volta, deviando dagli oggetti quotidiani per dare loro una seconda vita, un'altra possibilità, che onora la memoria di chi ha vissuto prima di noi attraverso i suoi oggetti personali. È un processo creativo dove nulla si distrugge ma tutto si ricrea assumendo forme nuove e nuova bellezza, in un détournement che riflette quella fluidità del contemporaneo che trasforma gli oggetti, li fa vivere e rivivere, segno di chi li ha fatti quanto di chi li usa. Oltrepassare un confine può significare superare ogni distinzione tra artigianale, industriale, maschile, femminile: la mia prima collezione nasce dal guardaroba di uno zio emigrato in America. Si supera la norma, si inventa una nuova regola dove si rifiuta ogni cosa prestabilita affermando l'ideale di bellezza del nostro momento storico. In cui il malfatto, il maltinto, il malricamato, l'imperetto diventano simboli di qualità. Imperfezione sta per mancanza e la mancanza suggerisce un'attesa. Il bordo che non è stato cucito attende una mano che lo finisca. L'imperfezione non si lascia dimenticare: è uno schiaffo alla nostra mentalità, provoca dissonanza cognitiva. Se non avessimo dissonanze cognitive, se tutto si svolgesse secondo le regole, se quella cucitura fosse fatta e potessimo finalmente dimenticarla, allora non ci sarebbe nessun motivo per continuare a pensare. Per imparare a pensare in modo nuovo. Noi tendiamo a non tollerare l'imperfezione e proprio questa è la sua forza: nel tentativo di giustificarla, di riportarla nell'orbita del ben fatto, siamo costretti ad inventarci soluzioni nuove. Il nuovo non nasce mai dalla perfezione. Il nuovo nasce dal buco, dal taglio, dal vuoto, da una mancanza a cui non cessiamo di pensare.*

## Acknowledgements

Amy H. Winter

A project of this scope and complexity could never be realized without a host of talented and dedicated individuals. I am indebted to the many people who contributed to *The Fabric of Cultures* in its first incarnation as an exhibition at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum in 2006, but particularly to my co-curators: Eugenia Paulicelli, Professor of Fashion Studies and European Language and Literature, who conceived of the innovative idea for the show, shaped its global contours and design, secured loans from far and wide, and single-handedly mounted an international symposium of far-reaching proportions and impact; Elizabeth D. Lowe, Associate Professor of Costume and Textile History and Curator of the Queens College Costume Collection, without whose expertise in costume and textile history and the care and display of garments the show, as they say, would not have gone on; and Julia Sharp, Lecturer, whose knowledge and appreciation of textile production, consumption, and distribution are without peer.



Fig. 1 – *The Fabric of Cultures*, Godwin-Ternbach Museum, 2006

No less significant are the individuals and foundations without whose vision, goodwill and support the project would still exist as an abstraction. Chief among these are Ward Mintz and the Coby Foundation, Ltd., whose funding sustained the entire project; the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc. and Gertrud and Harold Parker, all of whom gave generously to both the exhibition and the catalogue; Mrs. Jayne Wrightsman, whose garments are also highlights of the presentation; the New York Council for the Humanities, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and, as always, Queens College President Dr. James Muyskens and Sue Henderson, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and the Friends of the Godwin-Ternbach Museum, foremost among them Georgia de Havenon, Chair of the Museum's Advisory Board.

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# Introduction

Eugenia Paulicelli



Fig. 2 – Tapestry sleeve, Peru, Huarmey region, 700–900 AD

*The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity, Globalization* was an exhibition that originated at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum in 2006 and is the basis for this catalogue. The exhibition displayed garments and textiles that represented aesthetics and techniques from around the world, selected from examples in the Godwin-Ternbach Museum and the Queens College Costume Collection, and complemented by loans from private collections and international designers.

Traditional garments and textiles of non-Western cultures were shown along with modern examples from Western societies and the exhibition explored the themes of the enrichment of fashion by different ethnic sources, the reciprocal relationship of fashion and culture, and the central role of clothing in our lives. Designed to highlight and embrace the rich multicultural composition of the borough of Queens, it revealed how fashion, based in the world of appearances, is an ideal vehicle for visual interpretation and examination of our world.

## Where It All Began

Planning for *The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity, Globalization*, a multidisciplinary, pedagogical, and research project, started in 2003 at Queens College and The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. It involved the collaboration of many scholars and received strong institutional support within CUNY. The project culminated with the exhibition held at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum, a graduate student seminar, interdisciplinary conferences, a lecture series, and a fashion show. All these activities posed new questions and opened new doors for further collaboration. A selection of the papers given at both conferences at Queens College and The Graduate Center will be published in a volume entitled *The Fabric of Cultures. Fashion, Identity, Globalization* edited by Eugenia Paulicelli and Hazel Clark (Routledge:2009).

The aim of the project was threefold: to show the complexity in the production and consumption of fashion; to investigate the mechanisms of cultural production; and to examine the interaction between personal, national, and transnational identities.

Undergraduate and graduate seminars designed at Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center have increased scholarly interest in fashion and dress; and dissertations on topics related to fashion are now being developed. Cross-pollination of disciplines has brought new students into the field and encouraged new scholarship, while building bridges between the humanities and the natural and social sciences and crossing boundaries within single disciplines.

*The Fabric of Cultures* inquires into the interplay between tradition, modernity, and post-modernity. Societies and cultures are dynamic entities in constant flux. In the context of dress, this is manifest in style and choice of fabric. Since ancient times the body has been modified by dress to meet cultural and aesthetic needs, rendering it culturally visible. As fashions change, individual identity is expressed in selection of clothing that reflects culture, religion, social status, gender, income, and personal taste.



Fig. 3  
Shawl  
Wool  
Paisley, Scotland,  
17th–18th c.  
Courtesy of  
Margaret Liebling



# Fashion, Identity and Globalization

by Eugenia Paulicelli

The opening shots and the commentary of Wim Wenders' documentary film, *Notebook on Cities and Clothes*, about the designer Yoshi Yamamoto, bear directly on questions of identity. Reflecting on the meanings of identity in our contemporary age, we hear Wenders say:

*"Identity"*

*The word itself gives me the shivers.*

*It rings of calm, comfort, contentedness.*

*What is it, identity?*

*To know where you belong?*

*To know your self worth?*

*To know who you are?*

*How do you recognize identity?*

*We are creating an image of ourselves,*

*We are attempting to resemble this image...*

*Is that what we call identity?*

*(...)*

*We live in the cities.*

*The cities live in us...*

*Time passes.*

*We move from one city to another,*

*From one country to another.*

*We change languages,*

*We change habits,*

*We change opinions.*

*We change clothes,*

*We change everything.*

*Everything changes. And fast.*

For Wenders, fashion and identity are both products of the multiplication of the image, a process made possible by the technological revolution. From the 1970s onward, in a post-Fordist economy, the pace of production and consumption greatly accelerated and our perception of time and space was completely transformed.<sup>1</sup> In the

same way that images multiply, so too do styles, making it possible for individuals, consumers, and shoppers to shift from one look to the other, from one identity to the other, almost *ad infinitum*. To be aware of the fragile state of identity does not mean, however, that its very notion is “obsolete,” as Wenders suggests in his film. Rather, the fluidity of identity invites us to consider alternative notions of the self that are not fixed but always imply, in their texture and making, the “other” or the notion of difference, debunking a deterministic and monological notion of identity.<sup>2</sup>

From the fig leaf to jeans and formal gowns, dress and its fabric have borne the signs, the stitches and the folds of the inscription of the self, gender and class in a time-space relationship. As soon as we set foot in the world, clothes contribute to our construction of the self, as well as to our sense of private and social identity. This was already clear to writers in Renaissance Italy and Europe (Castiglione, for example, who published his *Book of the Courtier* in 1528) and their great concern to define identity in public spaces. But it was also clear to the philosopher Georg Simmel (1905) and other thinkers of the 19th century onward. Clothes are a vital component of the construction of the public, outer self, not to mention the perception of the personal, inner self. As Joanne Eicher has put it: “Dress is a coded sensory system of non-verbal communication that aids human interaction in *space* and *time*. The codes of dress include visual as well as other sensory modifications (taste, smell, sound, and feel).”<sup>3</sup>

But what is the relation between fashion, clothes and dress? Is there any difference between them? Similar to the notion of identity, these three terms are all linked and defined by time-space relationships. Their functions, however, are not identical. I would like to explain how and why. If clothes are the material basis for fashion, fashion itself is a cultural system of meanings and, I would add, an ongoing process of communication.<sup>4</sup> Clothes have no intrinsic meaning. Their meanings are acquired through a process of cultural mediation that takes place in a variety of ways, such as film, photography, the internet, publicity, and magazines, as well as individual taste and choices, etc.

Through this process of mediation, clothes enter the fashion system, which in turn is subject to similar transformations that affect identity. Clothing practices are intimately connected to social habits, gestures, and modes of behavior. Choices of dress and appearance shape the negotiations of individuals and groups at a given time in a given place. For instance, if we observe the clothing choices and dressing practices of a South East Asian youth group living in Queens, NY, this might completely differ from those of the same ethnic group living in Los Angeles or in Milan, Italy. Categories of time (the cultural history of a specific place), physical place (the city, neighborhood, architecture, climate, etc.), and the interaction amongst different ethnic groups, are important factors that inevitably affect people, individuals and the way they choose to dress and appear in public.

Hence, the process of identity formation is never fixed once and for all. It is, in fact, impossible to think of identity as a stable and well-defined entity. Identity is a process, a journey of becoming. Similar factors are also at work in “ethnic dress,” which as several scholars have emphasized is far from being stable and can no longer be considered the opposite of “fashionable dress” and its ever-changing styles.<sup>5</sup> Ethnic dress also changes across time and constantly redefines itself on the body of the wearer, offering an infinite number of variations of details, fabric, decoration, etc. Indeed, one of the aims of the “Fabric of Cultures” exhibition and this catalogue is to

show this creative interaction between ethnic dress, styles, and textiles through the experiments of past and current fashion designers.

What the selected garments illustrate is, on the one hand, how the relationship between fashion and identity is complex, drawing on many different sources; and on the other hand, how globalization of the economy and local information technology do not necessarily result in either the disappearance of traditions and cultures; or in alternative means of production or negotiation of identity and agency.<sup>6</sup>

Although after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Berlin Wall strong emphasis was placed on ethnic style in global fashion, designers like Romeo Gigli, John Galiano, Vivienne Tam, Dries van Noten, Kenzo, and Roberto Cavalli, had always been inspired by ethnic costume and cultures.<sup>7</sup> It is undeniable that the incorporation of “exotic” details occurred in fashion as early as the dawn of modernity, fueled by colonialism, travel, trade and wars. For instance, in his 1970s *Rive Gauche* collection, Yves Saint Laurent reinterpreted the colorful and flamboyant style of the Russian ballet (Fig. 4). A much earlier item, a paisley shawl from the second half of the 19th century (Fig. 3), represents a material trace of the British colonial empire in India. Indeed, shawls with the well-known “paisley” design of Indian cashmere (Kashmir) fabrics were introduced in Britain and Europe and became one of the period’s most fashionable accessories for women. This spurred the highly successful industry and manufacture of shawls in Paisley, Scotland, from which the pattern derived its name.

Turning from Scotland to the Middle East, a nomadic Turkoman woman’s caftan speaks of the diverse histories inscribed in it. (Fig. 5 and pp. 48-49) A tribal peasant garment, ca. 100 years old, it comes from Turkestan in Central Asia on the northeast border of Iran, and was acquired in Teheran in the 1970s. It is made of raw silk *ikat* fabric, a centuries old Malaysian decorative dyeing technique that is visible in other textiles in the catalogue (p. 134) Two silver coins are suspended from the front, center embroidery as decorations and as signs of wealth. One coin, ca.1931, depicts Faisal I the first King of Iraq. The other coin, dated 1938, is Saudi and shows a prayer

on one side. Different patches composing the dress can be actually and symbolically associated with the dissemination of styles and techniques that nomadic and global interchanges engender: a dissemination at work long before acceleration took place with recent political revolutions and the information technology revolution.

The caftan form itself is also an interesting example of contamination and reinvention by the culture that appropriates it, as in the case of a Moroccan adaptation that has undergone several phases and processes of “modernization” (pp. 54-55). Although caftans originated in Africa, they share the T-shape of the Middle Eastern variant. But they are very different in detail, choice of fabric and



Fig. 4 - Yves Saint Laurent red cape, *Rive Gauche* Collection, 1976/1977



Fig. 5 - Turkoman woman's caftan, *ikat* technique, Iran, ca. 1950

decoration, as in the Moroccan case, where, additionally, the use of the belt accentuates the waist—a feature missing from the other examples illustrated in this catalogue. As the belt is a distinctive trait of the Moroccan caftan, contemporary Moroccan fashion magazines, published in both French and Arabic, stress the modern, sexy and luxurious version of the garment. The caftan becomes a sign of both modernity and femininity, rather than a sign of something unfashionable.

Another example of appropriation and transformation of an item of national or traditional costume is the Indian *sari* seen below and on pp. 26-27. A recent study confirms my earlier discussion about ethnic dress.<sup>8</sup> A group of researchers, carrying out an investigation into the *lived* sari in contemporary India, interviewed women of different ages and occupations. They arrived at the conclusion that the sari has undergone a series of significant transformations, in perception and in use, and, contrary to Western assumptions, no longer corresponds to tradition or outmoded forms.

If we shift position and go to Milan, we might find that Italian-born Indian women, or those of the first generation raised in Italy, who most likely have lost touch with contemporary India, are eager to assimilate. They may refuse to wear saris like their mothers did and do, since for them it signifies that which is old and traditional. In the short story *Curry di pollo* (*Chicken Curry*) by Laila Wadia, the protagonist, a first-generation young Indian woman born in Milan, recounts just that—to the point that she rejects the fascination of Milanese youth for “Bollywood” style. This is a vivid example of how a given garment can acquire many different meanings in different contexts and within the frame of a time-space relationship.



Fig. 6 - Purple silk sari, Queens College Costume Collection

It is interesting to note that, unlike Asian and Middle Eastern countries, the West, and Italy in particular, has not adopted a single dress that epitomizes a national mark or style. Even during Italy's nationalist and fascist phase, when regional folkloric dress was diversified according to colors and specific traditional techniques of weaving and embroidery, there was no national dress. It is quite striking that in the late 1970s, although Italy and Milan were major sites of the ready-to-wear industry and had gained a prominent place on the global fashion map, an international designer like Antonio Marras stressed his link to Sardinia and the town of Alghero where he was born, and where he still works and lives with his family.

Within the fashion industry, Marras, and other designers discussed below, have taken a step in another direction in response to questions of identity, style and globalization. This trend must be taken into consideration if we are to understand the nuances and repercussions of globalization in different regions of the world.

In fact, it is unquestionable that there is a growing interest in the exploration of local traditions, craft and cultures in contemporary fashion design, often in the form of a dialogue. Marras' work, as a whole, moves in this direction: somewhere in the midst of art and fashion, where dress and textiles posit themselves in between outer and inner space, in a constant interplay. (Figs. 7 and 8 and pp. 38-39; 78-79). All this, it should be clear, does not mean that for Marras Sardinia is an idealized place of



Fig. 7 - Jacket and pleated skirt  
Antonio Marras, Fall/Winter 2000/2001



Fig. 8 - Evening jacket and skirt  
Antonio Marras, Haute Couture Collection  
Fall/Winter 1997/1998 and 2001/2002

romantic nostalgia. Nothing of the sort. What he wishes to express, instead, is the multilayered dimension of “home” that is inextricably connected with the idea and the actuality of a journey. Sardinia can be found in Argentina (another of Marras' inspirations) or other parts of the world, and vice versa—other localities that can transform into almost forgotten corners of Sardinia.

The concept of journey represents possibility and the desire to question the language with which we express ourselves, whether as an artist, a designer or an ordinary human being. As seen in the grey cotton jersey vest and pleated skirt ensemble (Fig. 9 and pp. 30-31), attention to regional history and tradition is also central to the Greek company .LAK, based in Athens and headed by Lakis Gavalas. This outfit was inspired by the traditional *Sarakatsana* dress (Fig. 10), worn on festive occasions by members of the *Sarakatsanaioi* society of Macedonia in Northern Greece. The reference to tradition and folk costume, however, is consciously given a modern twist with an awareness that Greece is not yet on the map of global fashion capitals, but has the potential to be so. It also illustrates the need to revisit one's own culture with a fresh eye rather than a sense of nostalgia, and points toward the future and a search for new ways to synthesize different motives and signs and eliminate borders. The line of a black cotton sun dress from the .LAK 2005 Spring collection is very clean; but if you turn up the hem it reveals a series of Greek postmarks printed in black on the white fabric ground.



Fig. 9 - Vest and pleated skirt, Cotton jersey, 2005,  
Lakis Gavalas (.LAK)



Fig. 10 – Traditional *Sarakatsana* dress

“Project Alabama”(Fig. 11) is another case in point. Its very name defines the brand in relation to a given geographic place—the southern US state of Alabama, where the company is based. At the same time, the name hints at something in the making—a laboratory. The company uses cotton from recycled T-shirts and employs local women for embroidering, underscoring the growing desire to maintain contact with grass roots while branching out into the global arena. In the fall of 2006, Natalie Chanin the designer of “Project Alabama,” founded “Alabama Chanin” as a continuation of her work with the former brand. She is also publishing a book celebrating hand sewing and other stories of embroidery and quilting.<sup>11</sup>

Fashion is both an economic force and a powerful mechanism for constructing the identity and images of a given country. One need only think about how “French chic” has been communicated via cultural mediation. On the other hand, as previously discussed, fashion nourishes itself on ideas from different cultures and aesthetics. Fashion and identity—personal, collective, transnational—are the result of a dynamic process, a dialogue between self and other. In other words, self and identity are not defined on the basis of closure and homologous relations, but in terms of the interplay between similarities and differences. This process, although expressed with different aesthetic results, is very much at work in the textiles and dresses considered in this study. What is also at stake is that through interaction and interplay one can see how difference imbricates identity. Otherness is within us and outside in the world and its material objects. Perhaps embracing it would help us to continue the journey, and exchange notes instead of weapons.

1 D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

2 M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* (Austin: University of Texas, 1990).

3 J. Eicher, *Dress and Ethnicity* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 1995). (emphasis added)

4 See R. Barthes, *The Fashion System* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); L. Svendsen, *Fashion. A Philosophy* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006); D. Purdy, ed. *The Rise of Fashion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

5 See Eicher, *Dress and Ethnicity*, S. Niessen and A.M. Leshkovich, eds., *Re-orienting Fashion. The Globalization of Asian Dress* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003).

6 J. Brand, J. Tennissen J. eds., *Global Fashion, Local Tradition* (Utrecht: Terra, 2006); E. Paulicelli, H. Clark, eds., *The Fabric of Cultures. Fashion, Identity, Globalization* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) (forthcoming). The anthology features essays on Italy, Soviet Union, Paris, India, Zambia, Vietnam, Greece, Brazil, China, and New York as well essays on global and regional issues in design and fashion. The collection is the result of academic conferences and a Ph.D. seminar taught at the CUNY Graduate Center, a research project that also gave rise to the exhibition at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum.

7 See L. Skov, “Ethnic Style in Fashion,” entry in V. Steele and J. Eicher, eds., *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* (New York: Scribner, 2004).

8 Miller D. ed., *Clothing as Material Culture* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005).

9 Paulicelli, E., *Fashion under Fascism. Beyond the Black Shirt*. (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004).

10 See Antonio Marras’ Foreword in A. Winter, ed., *The Fabric of Cultures. Fashion, Identity, Globalization*. Godwin-Ternbach Museum and, in the same catalogue, E. Lowe, “Tradition, Fashion, and Post-Modernism”

11 N. Chanin, and S. Stukin, *Alabama Stitch Book* (Tabori & Chang, 2008).

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Fig. 11 - Project Alabama, embroidered and painted skirt and dress, 2005

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# Tradition, Fashion, and Post-Modernism

by Elizabeth D. Lowe

**T**radition was long considered the sworn enemy of fashion, but more recently it has become its mainstay and, perhaps, lifeblood. What is tradition and how does it differ from fashion? And why have tradition and fashion become enmeshed in the post-modern world?

Tradition, as it applies to clothing, implies folk costume.<sup>1</sup> While it may evolve over time, it usually does so slowly and subtly. Change, if it occurs at all, is often abrupt and sometimes seismic, as with a sudden change in political leadership or, in the natural world, an earthquake. Traditions are stable and remain relatively constant, whereas fashions constantly change. The Indian sari shown on page 26 is a case in point. The basic rectangular shape of the garment has remained the same for centuries. And, although there is a fair degree of variation in the manner of pleating, those variations seem to reflect individual taste or represent regional preferences and styles, rather than a systematic or mass movement from one style to another, as is the case in cut and sewn Western dress.

Clothing in traditional societies is often imbued with highly significant meaning. Dynastic China, for instance, is the model of a traditional society where symbols incorporated into garments hold deep social, cultural, and philosophical or religious meaning. The Chinese man's robe shown on page 53 is a manufactured replica of a rare and luxurious, hand-embroidered Emperor's robe in which each motif represents one of the five elements of life related to traditional Chinese belief. Nine dragons depicted in the robe's design are representative of the element of fire; birds symbolize air; floral motifs signify the earth; fish and waves, water; and clouds the ether. Together these symbols denote heaven and earth and the Emperor's relationship to both realms.

In contrast to the glacial and episodic change in traditional societies, Western European and American cultures have seen a rapid and continual replacement of one style with another from the late Middle Ages up to the late 1960s. In the first half of the twentieth century, especially, designers produced remarkably similar styles in one season. For any given time period, there was a particular "look." In 1947, after the end of World War II, Christian Dior created a softened form that became known as "Dior's New Look," featuring sloping shoulders, nipped-in waist and a calf-length, full skirt. As First Lady in the early 1960s, Jackie Kennedy set trends and, following her style, well-dressed women wore neat, skirted suits with short boxy jackets, pillbox hats, and gloves. But this paper and the catalogue itself are not interested in chronologically tracking mass fashion. Rather, the examples chosen are presented to clarify the larger question of how fashion design in the latter twentieth and

Fig. 12  
Evening dress  
with heat-set  
pleats, Mary  
McFadden, Late  
20th century  
Queens College  
Costume  
Collection



early twenty-first centuries has been part of the historical process, altered by social, technological, political and economic change reflected in the appropriation, use, and transformation of numerous sources—most appositely, traditional garments.

With the growth of globalism and post-modernism, in the latter third of the twentieth century, a paradigmatic shift in the fashion process occurred. Designers no longer unfailingly produced like designs in a given season. In fact, after the outright rejection of the midi skirt by mini-skirt-clad women in the early 1970s, designers abandoned consistency within their own collections, showing mini, midi, and maxi skirts as well as pants all in the same year. Consumers were offered an enormous array of choices in service of the many aspects of their lives, displaying a new pluralism resulting from augmented production and communication as well as social changes in attitude toward race, gender, identity and class related to and accelerated by globalism. From an explosion in the quantity and types of products (for instance, *Tide*, with or without bleach, scent, or fabric softener; liquid or powder) to the revolution in electronic communications (including cell phones, Blackberries, and I-Pods), new and different merchandise inundated the market. Lifestyle choices ran the gamut from preppy to punk, gay and straight, and all were acceptable to someone; and in clothing “anything went”—skirts could

be short or long, ruffled or pleated or replaced by pants, or both worn together; and bras sometimes were worn as outerwear. With so many choices, consumers began to arrange their lives and their clothes in novel, unusual and sometimes transgressive ways.

Today in the global economy, with a marketplace filled with imported clothing from all corners of the earth, and instant information transmission via the internet, fashion is no longer homogeneous or hegemonic. It has become increasingly fragmented, subject to diverse ethnic influences, defying old standards, and apt to break the former rules of aesthetics. Paris, once the center of fashion from which all ideas and taste disseminated, is now just one of many centers, sharing the limelight with such other cities as Milan, Florence, Hong Kong, London, New York, and Tokyo. Each of these has its own traditions with ethnic and national influences that shape their design and offer the worldwide consumer a multitude of distinct choices.

Post-modern designers now actively mine ethnic traditions for nuggets of inspiration, evident in the numerous examples in this catalogue that exhibit modern clothing with a traditional look. In shape and decoration, Helene Arpels’ purple silk caftan resembles the traditional man’s Bedouin robe illustrated here and on page 47. Both utilize the basic T-shape, historically the earliest form of clothing, made only by cutting and with little or no sewing; and both are decorated with embroidery. But, following custom, the embroidery on the Bedouin robe is an example of complex, virtuoso



Fig. 13 - Bedouin robe; Silk caftan, Helene Arpels, both 20th c., QC Costume Collection

cross stitching by hand and is not purely decorative. Its diamond emblem, situated at the center of the stylized, overlaid chest panel, or “plastron,” is talismanic, showing a cross and an eye—symbols used to ward off evil. Its central placement corresponds to the solar plexus, “the seat of the soul,” and possibly signifies the locus of spiritual and physical energy. What’s more, a stylistic difference in embroidery may be hierarchical—abstract above and representational below—with the most sacred design reserved for the higher-placed torso area and

the worldly imagery indicated in various symbolic figures of birds and flora in the skirt below. By contrast, the Arpels caftan is decorated with elaborate machine stitching in gold and silver metallic thread, which, while aesthetically pleasing, functions as design rather than language, and has no symbolic significance.

This use of iconic traditions is also evident in the two-piece, pleated, wine-colored evening ensemble by Mary McFadden (pp. 16 and 34-35), who derived her inspiration for the garment’s elegant simplicity from the fluting and proportions of Greek Doric and Ionic columns, which, in turn may have been inspired by the pleating of traditional Greek garments like the *chiton* or *peplos* (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14 - Ancient Greek chiton, *The Delphi Charioteer*, 475-470 BC

In addition to borrowing ideas from various traditional sources, post-modern designers sometimes combine elements in a single outfit that defy time-honored notions of aesthetics and good taste. The ensemble by the Italian designer Antonio Marras seen ahead in the section on the “Poetry of Dress” (pp. 78-79) is an excellent example. The base of the jacket is a man’s wool suit jacket—one once owned by his Sardinian uncle, as a matter of fact—employed to make a personal and political statement about memory, history, identity, class and the folk tradition of recycling and refashioning materials. It functions as a metonym for respectable, bourgeois male dress. At the neck, ostrich feathers have been added and sequins are hand-sewn inside the hip of the jacket, which opens to the waist to expose the midriff and bust. Clearly these choices call into question customary standards of gender, identity, and occasion (plunging necklines, feathers, and sequins are the very antithesis of masculine, businesslike garb).

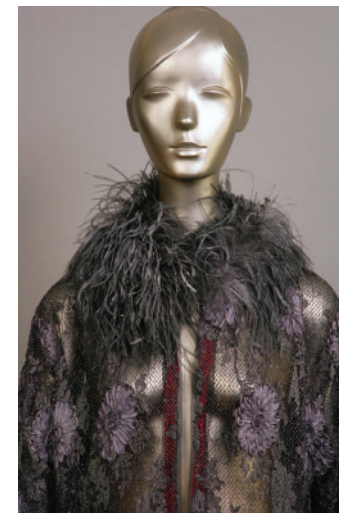


Fig. 15 - Marras evening jacket and skirt, neckline detail

The skirt is also a study in ambiguities and contradictions (Fig. 16). Its base is fashioned from a painter’s drop cloth, splashed with roughly painted brushstrokes, signifying the ordinary, the utilitarian, and the durable. However its construction with an exceptionally long train is anything but quotidian or practical. An overlay of netting, decorated with beading, wool patches, and visible basting threads, covers the train. The netting clearly renders the skirt ephemeral and impractical, while the wool patches and basting threads conflict with the notion of



Fig. 16 – Marras evening jacket and skirt, train detail

elegance implied by the train. The gown is the epitome of post-modernism, where “rules” intentionally are broken to overturn conventions and comment on the strict but arbitrary adherence to them that has dominated over so many generations. Marras’ seeming allusion to the Italian *‘arte povera’* art movement and intentionally crude simulation of abstract expressionist painting may also be a challenge to the precious and elite nature of fashion and art in this manifestly self-conscious construction.

Marras’s decision to patch the ensemble was made for artistic reasons and in recognition of the fact that throughout much of history, when only one or two sets of clothes were the norm, patching was done out of necessity—no doubt the case on an island as rustic and remote as Sardinia. Likewise, the Turkoman woman’s caftan, shown on page 49, is an everyday garment that has been extensively patched in order to extend its use. The patches are similar in color to the original *ikat* printed fabric, but also employ transparently different fabrics, including some with no pattern on them at all.

Another dramatic change in post-modern fashion practice is seen in reversals or blurring of class and taste hierarchies. No longer a top-down process, where the elite adopt new styles and set trends for the social strata below, fashions from the street, traditional societies and the third world are appropriated and deployed. Ostensibly, class lines have blurred considerably, though not economic inequality. The rich may dress down to

be inconspicuous or to psychologically “fit in” by assuming the dress of the masses. Or they may mix high and low, wearing an expensive Armani suit with a \$10 shirt from Target. Those of more modest means may save for years to buy a Rolex watch or pay for it on credit. Further blurring of class lines has resulted from the current compartmentalization of people’s lives. An accountant by day may become a glamorous woman at night in an Yves St. Laurent evening dress like the black, Chantilly lace gown shown on the facing page. Shrewd marketing, new production technologies, and global manufacturing (capitalizing on cheap labor of third world countries to maximize profit) have made very similar looking clothing and accessories available at many price points, making it more difficult to distinguish class affiliation simply by the look or sumptuousness of an outfit. Today, when luxury is synonymous with a series of brands controlled by billion dollar corporations, fashion is far less exclusive and considerably more accessible to everyone<sup>2</sup>.

In summary, today’s fashions, driven by social change and globalism, may draw inspiration from various and traditional sources to produce elegant items like the Oscar de la Renta pajamas on p. 71; or combine disparate ideas to disturb the syntax and deconstruct the meaning of dress like Marras’s outré, unconventional assemblage. We live today in a world replete with influences, information, and choices, rife with contradictions and conundrums. The nature of these influences and how they are seized and actualized are among the central concerns of this study.



Fig. 17  
Chantilly lace  
evening gown  
Yves St. Laurent,  
Autumn 1985  
QC Costume  
Collection

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1 Susan Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing* (New York, Fairchild, 1994), 393.  
2 Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster* (New York, Penguin, 2007).

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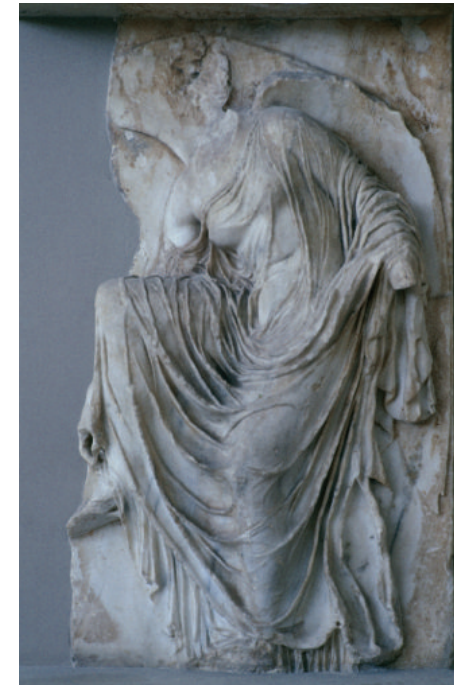
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# Costumes

## In the Beginning Draped and Pleated Garments



Perhaps the most ancient form of dress, draped and pleated clothing was made without dressmaking tools such as scissors, needle, or thread to envelop and adorn the body. Material and cut varied greatly over the centuries, combining draping with pleating in the earliest examples, then developing into more complicated variations that involved pressing and stitching of the material doubled over on itself, to more sophisticated modern methods of heat and ultrasound pleating.

Evidence of the early basic style can be seen in ancient Egypt, Greece, India, the Middle East, and Rome, spreading to the West through the Roman Empire. This style was adapted in various times and places in the modern era, apparent in such variations as the 18th-century Scottish kilt, the 19th-century high fashion inventions of Fortuny, the elegance of Mary McFadden's 1970s designs, and the futuristic, 21st-century high-tech creations of Issey Miyake. The catalogue includes a modern *sari* and a modern *chadri*, the headdress worn by women since the founding of Islam, and dresses by Balmain, McFadden and Pucci.

*Purple sari*

Silk with machine-embroidered metallic thread

Gift of Keith D. Jewell in memory of Alexander Papamarkou

Queens College Costume Collection, 241.002.25

Dating back before 200 BC, the sari is a traditional Hindu garment of South Asia. The style of drape seen here is just one of at least 100 different draping styles used in contemporary India. Like the draping style, particular weaves, motifs, and colors are associated with various regions and ethnicities, and types of fabrics employed reflect the class and status of the wearer. Saris are not worn by young girls until marriage and are associated with that rite of passage. As a possession, saris are considered a sign of wealth, and the finest are reserved for special occasions.

The Nivi style, which affords greater mobility, developed as middle class women entered the public sphere in the 20th century and was popularized by the film industry and national politicians. Seen as a pan-Indian phenomenon, the sari has become a symbol of the state, of women as Indians, and as a statement of support for the weaving industry of India. In the 20th century, the sari is as likely to be associated with Muslim women in Bengal as Hindus in southern India.



Blue Afghani *chadri*

Rayon, ca. 1960

Gift of an anonymous donor

Godwin-Ternbach Museum, 92.7.35

*Chadri* is the Afghani name for the *burkha* worn by Islamic women in public and in the presence of men outside the family circle. The unpleated front panel is waist length, allowing the woman to use her hands. The cap is embroidered with an openwork design at eye level, and masses of tiny pleats fall from the cap on the sides and back. It is primarily used by urban woman, often over fashionable clothes, as a symbol of non-laboring status, whereas village women wear only a headscarf to allow greater range of motion in work.

These pleats, which create textural interest, are done with the same heat setting technique used in the wine-colored dress by Mary McFadden shown on pages 34-35. Both resemble the pleating style innovated by Mario Fortuny for the *Art Nouveau* textiles and fashions of his “Delphos” line, which included finely pleated silk gowns and scarves.



Gray vest and pleated skirt  
Cotton jersey, 2005  
Lakis Gavalas (.LAK), Kolonaki, Greece  
Courtesy of Lakis Gavalas

Greek fashion entrepreneur Lakis Gavalas recently inaugurated a new line of clothing under the label .LAK, of “smart yet edgy casual wear,” featuring practical clothes with the best possible fit. Gavalas indicates that his inspiration for this basic jersey skirt and vest was in the Sarakatsana costume, pictured below, with pleats, shoes and leg warmers integral to the modern, like the traditional, concept. As to the design, his intention is to create a kind of a “luxury uniform,” like t-shirts and jeans, in an up-market style.



Sarakatsana dress  
Courtesy of Lakis Gavalas

This “Sarakatsana” dress, which inspired Gavalas’ nearby design, embodies elements of the rich legacy of Greek tradition. A traditional costume, it is worn by members of the Sarakatsanaioi society of Macedonia in Northern Greece. These people were nomadic herders who lived outside villages until the beginning of the 20th century.

A costume such as this would not have been worn on a daily basis but only on special occasions. The motifs on the blouse cuffs and skirt hem resemble the decoration found on Greek vases of the Geometric period (700-500 BC) and may attest to the antiquity of this culture, just as the pleated skirt and vest may reflect the early use of pleating in ancient dress. The elaborate jewelry would have accompanied its owner to the grave.



Orange tiered, pleated skirt and surplice blouse  
Silk mousseline  
Oscar de la Renta for Pierre Balmain, Spring/Summer 2001  
Gift of Mrs. Jayne Wrightsman  
Queens College Costume Collection, 214.004.2 a&b

The brilliant orange of this highly feminine ensemble, consisting of a surplice blouse and pleated tiered skirt with fringed edges, is accented by a necklace of coral and carved mother-of-pearl. Together they suggest a Caribbean theme with underlying Spanish influence. Even though it is a *haute couture* creation, its tiered skirt recalls the flounces of the flamboyant costume worn by Flamenco dancers, who inhabit an entirely different level of the social hierarchy.



Two-piece wine-colored evening dress  
 Polyester with heat-set pleats  
 Mary McFadden, late 20th century  
 Gift of Perry Ellis  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 210.91.10 a, b

McFadden is well known for drawing on multi-cultural sources as inspiration for her designs, evident in this lovely asymmetrical dress that features a one-shoulder top sloping diagonally in the opposite direction of the neckline over a floor-length skirt.

The architectural quality of the design is pronounced. The scalloped edge of the skirt's hem echoes the scallops above to create a rhythmic play of lines in counterpoint to the column of pleats. Here, a chic, ready-to-wear ensemble, produced by use of heat-set pleating technology, creates a look similar to Fortuny's undisclosed technique of the early 20th century.

The simple but elegant styling of the dress is a modern incarnation of the classical Greek *chiton*, often shown worn off one shoulder as in the beautiful relief sculpture of *Nike Tying Her Sandal* (410-407 BC) from the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis illustrated on p. 25.



Spaghetti strap jumpsuit  
 Silk jersey  
 Emilio Pucci, late 20th century  
 Gift of Perry Ellis  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 210.91.1

This signature garment by Pucci was probably produced in the 1960s, when he was celebrated for clothes that were easy to pack and wrinkle resistant, making him a favorite of the jet set. His choice of fabrics allowed him to fashion non-restrictive clothes that were informal but sophisticated. His own prints, designed in an array of brilliant colors that included kaleidoscopic and mosaic patterns, were inspired by his travels to Cuba, Bali, India, Asia, and Africa. A man of his times, his designs also mirrored psychedelic youth culture, rock music, and op and pop art of the period.

This jumpsuit fits well into the repertoire of casual, easy-care but glamorous fashions. The deep inverted pleats make the legs so voluminous that they resemble a skirt more than pants, at a time when women wearing pants was just beginning to be acceptable.



Jacket and knife-pleated patchwork skirt  
 Recycled vintage felt wool jacket, woolens, embroidery, appliqué, lace  
 Antonio Marras, Fall/Winter 2000-2001  
 Courtesy of Antonio Marras, Sardinia, Italy

Many of the same methods and motives seen in the *haute couture* gown by Marras, on view on page 79, are apparent in this outfit. The use of recycled *povera* materials with an excess of flamboyant ornament pushes this dressy suit outside the norms of convention. The garment is an orchestration of tensions between the ordinary and the extraordinary, business wear and evening wear, simple and elaborate. Even the heavy beadwork is a jarring counterpoint to the sheer netted top that it embroiders, creating a dissonant composition that somehow succeeds in its absolute audacity. The inside of the jacket, seen in the upper detail at the right, is as elaborate and dissonant as the outside.



## Following Suit T-Shape Garments



One of the earliest shapes for cut and sewn garments was the T-shape. Like the Egyptian *kalasaris* and the Indian *sari*, it was a simple affair. This form resulted in a minimum waste of fabric and easy construction. Not surprisingly, the T-shape was independently discovered by people in many areas of the ancient world. It probably arose by necessity of economy, climate and functionality—the simplicity and looseness of the garment perfect in its uncomplicated production, comfort, and ease of wear. In the catalogue, a number of interpretations of the T-shape by different cultures are seen in various forms, displaying the versatility of style and beautiful effects possible through choice of fabric, details, and variations. They include a Japanese kimono, modern caftans, a Bedouin robe, a Palestinian wedding dress, a Turkoman caftan, and Chinese robes.

### Wedding dress

Black cotton, red, pink, purple and mauve thread

Palestine, ca. 1915

Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 92.7.34

This elaborately cross-stitched dress shows a variety of symbolic geometric motifs significant of fertility, suitable to the garment's function. It is possible that the two delicately embroidered trees that rise out of the side panel embroidery of the skirt represent the tree of life.

### Cross-stitch embroidery

Cross-stitch embroidery is one of the oldest types of embroidery and the most popular form in the Western world, done using X-shaped stitches to form an image or design. Different areas of the globe devised their own distinct style, stitch and color combinations as is apparent in the cross-stitched Bedouin and Palestinian garments illustrated ahead. In Eastern and Central Europe, cross-stitch is done in two-dimensional floral and geometric patterns, usually worked in black and red cotton floss on linen. In the United States, the earliest known cross-stitch sampler was created by Loara Standish around 1653. An example of an 18th century cross-stitch sampler is on view in the Textile section of the catalogue.



Japanese woman's kimono  
Salmon-colored silk jacquard, 20th century  
Gift of Keith D. Jewell in memory of Alexander Papamarkou  
Queens College Costume Collection, 241.002.2

This silk damask kimono shows hand-stenciled flowers and magnificent phoenix birds with plumed tails that create a dynamic arabesque, framing the robe's hem. These elements correspond to Japanese aesthetics, pantheism, and cultural traditions. First appearing in the Edo period (1603-1868), the popularity of the kimono in Japan, and often in the West, continues to this day.



### Bedouin robe

Dark brown crepe with cross-stitch embroidery, 20th century

Gift of Keith D. Jewell in memory of Alexander Papamarkou

Queens College Costume Collection, 241.002.13

This robe differs from a traditional *kaftan*, a T-shape waist- or ankle-length tunic worn by men in ancient Mediterranean cultures. It is constructed in six pieces with an overlaid chest panel and set-in sleeves, without any fitting. The term *kaftan* is a Russian adaptation of the Ottoman Turkish term “*qaftan*.”

Called a *thob*, the robe is covered in elaborate cross-stitch embroidery in a pattern of stylized birds, flowers and geometric motifs. Differences in the embroidery appear in the chest panel and the lower portions and set-in side panels. The floral motifs symbolize fertility and the birds the flight of the soul to heaven. The splendid diamond emblem on the chest panel is talismanic, showing a cross and an eye to ward off evil. Its central placement on the solar plexus, “the seat of the soul,” could signify the locus of all spiritual and physical energy. Thus the difference in embroidery may be hierarchical, with the most sacred design reserved for the top and the worldly imagery indicated below.

### Purple silk caftan with metallic embroidery

Helene Arpels, late 20th century

Gift of the Estate of Lily Auchincloss

Queens College Costume Collection, 216.96.15

This elegant dress made of purple silk shantung probably dates from the late 1970s or ‘80s. A woman’s garment inspired by a traditional caftan, it has tapered, set-in sleeves, and is cut closer to the body with bust darts to provide greater fit.

It is elaborately decorated with machine embroidery in stylized organic shapes. In traditional culture, hand-crafting was both an economic and technological necessity as well as a spiritual activity that afforded the artist a place of high social esteem. Thus, unlike the Bedouin robe, the embroidery bears no spiritual meaning, in spite of its beauty. The adaptation of the originally male caftan to women’s wear also digresses from tradition.

However this adaptation does have modern social and cultural significance. It manifests the period’s fascination with “other” cultures popularized by the “hippie” movement and reflects the choice of unconstricted clothing by the women’s movement—embraced then as it was in other eras of women’s liberation.



### Turkoman woman's caftan

Raw silk and natural dye with decorative coins, Iran, ca. 1900

Courtesy of Reza and Paula Yavari

This colorful woman's caftan from Turkestan, in Central Asia on the northeast border of Iran, is a tribal peasant garment obtained in Teheran around 1970 but 80 to 100 years old. The dress is composed of numerous patched areas, due to availability of material and repair. It is made of *ikat* fabric, a centuries-old Malaysian decorative dyeing technique.

Two silver coins are suspended from the center front embroidery as signs of wealth. One coin (ca. 1931) depicts Faisal I the first king of Iraq. The other coin is Saudi (1938) and shows a prayer on one side. The original Malaysian source of the ikat technique as well as the presence of coins from nearby Muslim territories are evidence of the far-reaching transmission of culture through textiles and clothing, most likely through the ancient silk routes of Asia, and the constant change of political and national borders in the Middle East throughout history—unified nonetheless by Islam. Such instances of dissemination elsewhere in this catalogue demonstrate that global interchanges due to trade, colonization, and other historical factors existed well before the modern era, and have accelerated in tandem with technology.



Chinese woman's robe  
Black silk with hand embroidery, 20th century  
Gift of Lilliana Teruzzi  
Queens College Costume Collection, 202.87.3

This woman's robe, and the man's robe on the following page, show Chinese adaptations of the T-shape. Its beautiful hand embroidery shows satin-stitched birds, butterflies, fish, flowers and insects encircling the figures of a woman and child. These images illustrate the veneration of nature, and human harmony with nature, central to Chinese ethos. Worn by an older woman, it signifies the Confucian precepts of family harmony and reverence for elders.



Chinese man's robe  
Blue silk with metallic stitch detailing, 20th century  
Gift of Betsy Brower  
Queens College Costume Collection, 95.88.11

This blue silk robe with metallic stitching is a popular, manufactured replica of an Emperor's precious hand-made garment. Made for casual wear, as indicated by its color, it shows nine dragons related to Taoist numerology, surrounded by symbols of good fortune and the five elements in stylized emblems: clouds (ether), birds (air), flowers (earth), fish and billowing abstract waves (water), and the dominant element (fire) represented by the dragon. All together they signify heaven and earth and the Emperor's divinity and power.



Moroccan woman's chartreuse evening ensemble  
Satin and moiré, late 20th century  
Courtesy of Malika Chenoufi

A perfect example of the versatility of the T-shape and the beautiful effects possible through choice of fabric, techniques, and silhouette, this ensemble reflects the style's persistence in contemporary Moroccan attire. The satin and moiré fabrics give the gown an airy, flowing line, in contrast to the other more traditional garments in this group. Intense color and decorative details highlight the sophistication of design. Like the orange Middle Eastern woman's coat seen ahead, the outer coat is closed at the front with a multitude of tiny fabric toggle buttons secured by loops—another traditional means dating back to the Middle Ages. The fleur-de-lis embroidery, framing the scalloped edges of the undergarment and netting of the scarf, enhance its graceful simplicity.



## The Outer Limits Coats



Coats are outerwear garments with sleeves and a center front closure, designed to be worn over other clothes as protection from the elements. The etymology of the word coat traces back to ca. 1300 to the Frankish word *kotta* for “coarse cloth.” The usage of the word coat is also related to the Medieval coat of armor in its protective function. Universally, the earliest coats—capas and mantles—like other early garments, were made without tools.

The first true coat (ankle length with well-shaped sleeves and a collar) can be seen in a frieze on the Apadana Stairway in Persepolis dating from 500-350 BC seen above. During the 11th-century Crusades, Islamic imports of great quality brought back to the West inspired Europeans to introduce the *surcoat*, replacing the Medieval *bliant*, a long, shapeless, loose overgarment. By the 17th century, fitted outerwear coats with buttons (also from Islam), deriving from military and sporting coats and made possible through technical advances in the art of tailoring, became highly fashionable for both men and women. Thereafter, and to this day, variations on the overcoat have proliferated. Included in the catalogue are modern embroidered coats in traditional styles from the Middle East and Mexico; a high-fashion coat by Sorelle Fontana; and an art-to-wear coat by Deborah Brand, which illustrate different adaptations of the overcoat.

Middle Eastern orange woman's coat  
Wool felt with white machine embroidery  
Gift of the Estate of Lily Auchincloss  
Queens College Costume Collection, 216.96.16

This basic coat is enlivened by its silk chain-stitch embroidery in foliate, floral and tendril-like patterns, harking back to the widespread use of natural motifs in traditional Eastern clothing. Here we see fluid, abstract looping designs that are closer to nature's organic forms than the angular geometric cross stitching of the Bedouin and Palestinian garments displayed in the T-shape section of the catalogue.



Woman's cream coat  
Linen with multicolored embroidery  
Mexican, late 20th century  
Gift of Muriel Kallis Newman  
Queens College Costume Collection, 243.003.3

The partially-stitched released pleats at the bodice front and sides, and the satin-stitch embroidered cuffs, provide interest to an otherwise simple coat. The festive embroidered colors evoke the bright tropical hues of southern climes and the coarse, cream-colored linen suggests the clothing of *campesinos*, rural native farmers and laborers of Mexico.



Woman's green and white dress coat  
Silk jacquard brocade with velveteen lining  
House of Fontana, late 20th century  
Courtesy of Centenary College Costume Collection

This dress coat, with three-quarter-length sleeves, is reminiscent of the style popularized by Jackie Kennedy in the early 1960s, for whom Fontana designed. The elegant brocade with satin, twill, and basket weaves shows a pattern of stylized flowers and branches, which are more naturalistic than the designs of the Near and Middle Eastern robes and coat seen in the previous pages. Like other of Fontana's creations, interesting details like the mock-turtle neckline and the cape distinguish its styling.



Deborah Brand

*Fuschia Shock* coat, 2000

Cashmere blend wool, velvet, mohair and wool yarns, beads, glass buttons

Courtesy of the artist

This art-to-wear, one-of-a-kind coat by Deborah Brand, an alumna of the Queens College Art Department, is a basic T-shape that is fitted at the shoulders to give it further form. It combines sewing with knitting, crocheting and beading to create rich tapestry-like embroidery. Brand, who works in many different media, is inspired by Baroque and Art Nouveau styles, evident in the abundant decoration, spiraling leaf pattern and use of saturated, contrasting colors to effect her “Fuschia Shock,” a playful pun, as well, on the well-known book title *Future Shock*. Art Nouveau, an international style of decoration and architecture that developed in the 1880s and 1890s, drew upon many different cultural sources, from Byzantium to folk art, visible, for instance, in the art of Gustav Klimt. It was characterized by coiling plant forms that symbolized the procreative power of nature. This extraordinary coat has been featured previously in costume exhibitions at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the DeCordova Museum.



## Pajamas Public or Private?



The word pajama literally means “leg clothing” and is derived from the ancient Persian words *pae jama* or Hindi *pai jama* dating back to the garments worn by Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, beginning in 1457. One version of pajamas—a one- or two-piece garment with pants—has been worn as a traditional costume throughout the Middle and Far East for centuries by both men and women. Westerners adopted pajamas as outerwear in the early 17th century after exploration and trade with the East. In the 19th century, Europeans living in India employed pajamas exclusively as men’s sleepwear to replace nightshirts. Today, pajamas are worn by both men and women, coming back full circle to their original use by both genders, and have even become an alternative to more formal evening dress, apparent in the designs of Chanel, de la Renta, Feraud, and St. Laurent on the following pages.

Black and gray lounging peignoir  
 Silk chiffon with feather trim  
 Louis Feraud of Paris  
 Gift of Janet Solinger  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 218.97.7

This flamboyant lounging peignoir demonstrates a strong African influence with its bold, abstract design reminiscent of traditional Mali mud cloth (seen in the Textile section on pp. 130-31). The profusion of dyed natural feathers located at the lower edge of the cape provide a true touch of drama. A Western equivalent to the marvelous ritual costumes of African tribes—its grand cape like bird wings that catch the wind when extended, its eye design like an apotropaic symbol—suitable for the rituals of the rich and famous.

Persimmon four-piece evening ensemble  
 Stenciled organza coat and floral-printed silk chiffon pajamas  
 Oscar de la Renta, Spring 1998  
 Gift of Mrs. Jayne Wrightsman  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 214.000.4 a,b,c,d

The coat's stiff, transparent organza fabric, abstract motifs, and persimmon color, as well as the pajama styling, are evocative of East Asian aesthetics and design. The coat's hand-stenciled print, edged in gold, recalls traditional patterns of cultures East and West.



Two-piece evening ensemble

Silver sequin pants and pearl gray knitted jacket with wave motif

Chanel, Spring 1998

Gift of Mrs. Jayne Wrightsman

Queens College Costume Collection, 214.000.5 a, b

This ensemble fulfills all expectations of what a *haute couture* creation should be and the way in which pajamas have become an alternative to evening gowns. An array of hand-stitched sequins ornament the pants, alternating between silver and rainbow colors in stylized leaf patterns, to create a shimmering optical effect. The jacket has a unique construction. Long filament yarns are grouped in vertical columns, stitched over the top with net to hold them in place, creating a soft, wave-like pattern that complements the pants. An additional decorative touch is added by the self-fringed cuffs that give the illusion of feathers.



Red and black pajama ensemble  
 Printed velvet jacket and burn-out velvet pants, beads, buttons, silk baubles  
 Oscar de la Renta, Autumn 1996  
 Gift of Keith Jewell in memory of Alexander Papamarkou  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 241.98.4

From the close-fitted cut of the floor-length coat to the purely decorative tassels on the bodice, the influence of nineteenth-century Russian men's coats is suggested in this opulent garment.



## The Poetry of Dress Lace and Openwork



Though similar in effect and often in appearance, true lace can be distinguished from other openwork. The word lace derives from the Old French *las*, meaning noose or string, and is patterned, openwork fabric made by plaiting, knotting, looping, or twisting. The finest lace is made from linen thread. The only true lace is handmade needlepoint and bobbin lace, developed in 16th-century Europe as a technique to create delicate fabrics that served as ornamentation for clothing. Venice and Flanders were early leaders in lace production, and Louis XIV was so fond of lace that he established the French lace industry by importing Venetian and Flemish lacemakers. By the 17th century in France, lace was almost exclusively reserved for the aristocracy and by the Rococo 18th century, lace and other decorative embellishments were associated with femininity.

Clothing and its qualities have always been signifiers of social class and wealth, with exclusive elements such as hand-made lace usually out of the reach of the common person. But machine-made lace developed in the 19th century made it affordable to all. Today's designers use lace to create everything from inexpensive lingerie trim to extravagant evening dresses like the ones by Chanel and St. Laurent displayed in this section.

Other techniques like crocheting and netting give a lace-like effect. Elegant openwork evening gowns by Antonio Marras, created using a netting technique, integrate technology and craft and art and fashion to combine local Sardinian influences with a global vision of design.

White evening gown with bolero jacket  
 Cotton floral lace  
 Chanel, Spring 1996  
 Gift of Jayne Wrightsman  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 214.001.1 a, b

From the bolero jacket to the feminine floral lace, the cultural antecedents of this gown are clearly Spanish, with similar floral openwork construction found even in textile samples of ancient Peru. Its use of white cotton yarn speaks to its design for a less formal spring effect than the black and silver gowns of Chantilly lace designed for autumn and winter, respectively.

Black evening gown with tiered skirt  
 Chantilly lace  
 Yves St. Laurent, Autumn 1985  
 Gift of Mrs. Jayne Wrightsman  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 214.000.6

Like the silver lace St. Laurent gown, this stunning gown is another *haute couture* creation appropriate for a gala evening or even a wedding, were it white in color. It is fashioned of bobbin lace in a delicate floral pattern on a soft mesh background. The underbodice is made of satin, while the underskirt is chiffon. Although France popularized the use of lace, black lace dresses and mantillas are commonly associated with Spanish culture, as seen in portraits by Goya and other court painters.

Pewter Chantilly lace evening gown with ribbon sash  
 Silk charmeuse with metallic lace  
 Yves St. Laurent, Autumn/Winter 1998  
 Gift of Jayne Wrightsman  
 Queens College Costume Collection, 214.000.1 a,b,c

A *haute couture* creation of the House of Yves St. Laurent, this elegant evening gown has all the markers of affluence and the aristocratic French penchant for lace and femininity. The universal appeal of lace in European high culture could make a gown such as this equally a product of Italian, Spanish, or Flemish origin. Decorated with elaborate lace scrolls and floral motifs, the dress is worn over a full-length silk charmeuse slip and accented with ribbon at the waist.



#### Evening jacket

Lace, ribbon embroidery, man's recycled vintage wool suit jacket, beadwork, sequins, and feathers

Antonio Marras, Haute Couture Collection, Fall/Winter 1997-1998

Courtesy of Antonio Marras, Sardinia, Italy

This unusual ensemble, typical of Marras' work with recycled clothing, combines local Sardinian materials in a fashion spectacle that defies classical concepts of beauty. A very definite fashion statement, it addresses issues of high and low culture, gender norms, and distinctions of class. The jacket's combination of a man's wool suit jacket with ultra-feminine lace, ribbon work, and feathers, creates a paradoxical effect that blurs notions of male and female and good and bad taste, with the intention of shock practiced by the avant-garde. In another reversal (seen also in the Marras Jacket on p. 39), the inner lining of the jacket is covered with sequins, antithetical to their usual glittering display, making the garment impractical for comfortable wear. In these outré choices, Marras seems to satirize high fashion and all its trappings.

#### Grey wool skirt

Canvas, netting, lace, recycled man's vintage suit trousers

Antonio Marras, Fall/Winter 2001/2002

Courtesy of Antonio Marras, Sardinia, Italy

Despite the fact that this skirt was made for a different collection at a different time, the recycled wool of the skirt matches the recycled wool of the jacket. Marras indicated that the materials came from a suit of one of his uncles, adding another layer of meaning to his inspiration and suggesting that his motivations and politics are not just satirical but based in personal memory and history as well. In this pastiche, he pays homage to the humble plebeian practice of patching as much as to native Sardinian influences.

The exaggeratedly long train is anti-functional and backed by a canvas resembling an ordinary housepainter's drop-cloth, painted in an abstract expressionist style. Complete with patches from the lower sleeves of a man's suit, buttons and all, the obvious basting stitches emphasize the ordinarily concealed mechanics of construction. At the edge of the train, heavy beadwork is applied to fragile netting, which also covers the entire area of the canvas; and the sides of the train are edged with gaudy machine-made lace. Altogether the outfit is a medley of contradictions that raise questions well beyond the borders of fashion, while giving a theatrical presentation appropriate to the *defile* of the runway.



# Textiles

The Fabrics of Cultures



## Introduction

Textiles from traditional and Western societies are shown in this section of the catalogue. They are organized by categories of fabrication method (weaving, knitting and crocheting); coloration method (resist-dyeing, painting and printing); and surface embellishment (embroidery and appliqué). Adaptations of traditional textiles, produced for modern industrial societies, are also included.

Textiles are essential elements of clothing and other items of material culture. In traditional societies, textiles are highly valued, conveying cultural, social, religious and spiritual beliefs, gender identity, and social status. Though separated in time and space, different cultures often used similar or identical materials, decorative techniques, and construction methods to epitomize their unique qualities.

Industrialization and more recently globalization have challenged traditional methods of textile production. The Industrial Revolution produced abundant inexpensive machine-made fabric that imitated the designs of other cultures. This led to the decline and devaluation of hand-made materials, threatening modification to suit Western taste or disappearance of authentic traditions altogether. But this is not a new concept, since cultures have always been in flux. As travel, trade and conquest brought new ideas, cultures adapted to changing economies. For instance, at the height of colonialism, bright, printed West African fabrics that were originally copies of Indonesian designs were manufactured in Holland and England.

Today, in the global arena, designs from Indonesia may be printed on fabric from India, made into clothing in China, and sold to Mexican immigrants in the United States. Yankee baseball caps and sneakers may be found combined with traditional garb in highly eclectic combinations. At the same time, a recent renaissance in traditional cultures has also brought revival of traditional methods and attire, worn to signify national and ethnic pride or to symbolize personal identity. Additionally, a renewed interest in hand-crafted textiles and clothing made by small ethnic cooperatives all over the world has resulted in new global markets.

But a delicate balance exists between the advantages and disadvantages of globalization. The manufacture of inexpensive imitations of traditional textiles for the ever-changing world of fashion modifies and leaves behind the fine craftsmanship and symbolic or lexical significance of the cultures that originally produced them. In industrialized countries, old and inefficient machinery combined with stringent environmental protection laws have driven textile production overseas. Phased-out tariffs and quotas on textile imports have caused explosive growth with a parallel expansion of unregulated factories that have severely increased pollution. It remains to be seen whether the new global order will be the harbinger of successful cultural fusions or wholesale homogenization.

## Designs Created by Production Techniques



Textiles originated in the production of baskets, probably in the early Paleolithic period, 27,000 years ago. Basketry is the use of unspun vegetable fibers to form a container. Many different techniques were used to create baskets, including looping, knotting, stitched coils, plaiting and the interlacing of two or more elements. All these were later used to create fabrics from fine, flexible materials; yarns twisted together from thin animal or plant fibers. Archeological specimens of cloth from the Middle East date back to 7,000 to 9,000 BC and Peruvian textiles and weaving tools to 5,800 BC.

The most common techniques used to produce cloth include weaving, looping in the form of knitting and crocheting, and knotting, such as lace and netmaking. Some cultures soak and beat the inner bark of certain trees to create fabric; others entangle animal fibers to form felt.

Although techniques may be similar in different cultures, unique designs are created by selection of fiber type, yarn thickness, patterns and color combinations.



Early Inca flared basket  
Vegetable material  
Peru, Far South Coast, 1100–1200 AD  
Gift of an anonymous donor, GTM 2002.7.21

Inca dish  
Reeds  
Peru, Far South Coast, 1200–1400 AD  
Gift of an anonymous donor, GTM 2002.7.59



Inca Fez style hat  
Camelid wool, coiled vegetable fiber  
Pica, Chile, 1340–1470 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2002.7.45



## Weaving

Weaving is the most commonly used method of producing fabric, which developed independently in different parts of the world. It is the process of interlacing two or more sets of yarns, usually at right angles to each other, to form a coherent structure. Lengthwise yarns—called warps—are laid in place; and cross yarns—called weft—are interlaced between them in an over-under action.

To produce a uniform piece of cloth, it is best if the warp yarns are held under tension by the use of a loom. Most looms, even simple ones, have one or more “heddles,” used to alternatively lift and lower some of the warp yarns. This makes it easier to pass the weft yarns over and under the warp yarns.

Similar types of looms have developed independently in different cultures. Backstrap looms, which are portable, are used by indigenous peoples in Peru, Guatemala, Africa, India, Indonesia and Tibet, among other countries.

The most common types of simple looms are

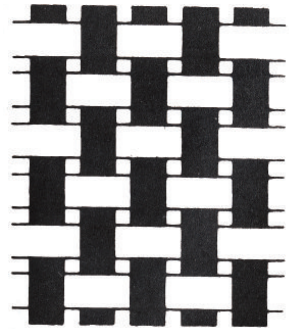
- Backstrap looms that are attached around the waist of the weaver and the weaver’s body is used to create tension on the warp yarns
- Horizontal ground looms that hold the warp yarns tense by pegs beaten into the ground
- Hanging or drag looms that create tension by attaching stone or clay weights to warp yarns or to a rod holding the warp yarns



By the use of different colored warp and weft yarns, and by varying the number of warp yarns that a weft yarn crosses over, intricate patterns and designs can be created. Beautiful hand-woven fabrics are still created in many cultures. Examples here range from the Kente Cloth of the Asante tribe of Ghana to the hand-woven fabrics of South America. Many traditional designs have been copied using modern mechanized weaving techniques. For instance, during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the designs of hand-woven Kashmir shawls were copied in the factories of Paisley, Scotland. Hand- and machine-woven Kashmir and Paisley shawls are shown ahead.

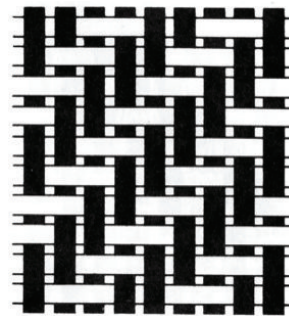
## Weave Types

There are three basic types of weaves; plain weave, twill weave and satin weave. Through variations and combinations of these weaves, exquisite fabrics such as velvet, double cloth, brocade and others can be produced.



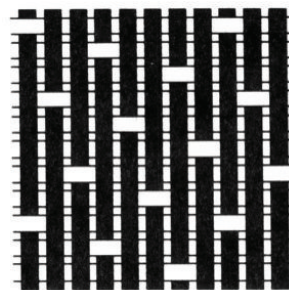
### Plain Weave

The simplest form of weaving that is often a good base for decoration by dyeing or printing.



### Twill Weave

Identified by diagonal lines on the fabric surface and used for its durability.



### Satin Weave

Identified by its smooth and lustrous appearance, it is traditionally silk. Most modern commercially-woven satin is made from synthetic fibers.



Chancay textile sampler on miniature tapestry loom  
Wool, natural dyes  
Peru, Central Coast, 300–600 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 99.2.29



Two figures within border  
Wool  
Peru, Chimu, 5th–15th c. AD  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Steinberg, GTM 63.50



Hand-woven fragment of a tunic  
Camelid fiber, natural dyes  
Peru, Huari, 500–1000 AD  
Promised gift of anonymous donor

Tapestry sleeve with image of two warriors  
Camelid thread  
Peru, Huarmey region, 700–900 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2002.7.9



Hand-woven tunic fragment with profile faces and frets  
Camelid fiber, natural dyes  
Peru, Huari, 600–900 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 98.4.4

Hand-woven tunic fragment with abstract mythological motifs  
Wool, natural dyes  
Peru, Huari, 600–900 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 98.4.2



Hand-woven bag panel decorated with rows of deer  
Camelid fiber, natural dyes  
Peru, Nazca Huari, 600–1000 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 98.4.5



Woven Huarcho doll  
with cone-shaped head  
Dyed alpaca  
Peru, Central Coast, ca. 900 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2003.10.9



Miniature tunic  
Cotton, natural dyes  
Peru, Inca, 1400–1532 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2004.9.1



Hand-woven bag with long tassels  
Cotton, wool, natural dyes  
Peru, Inca, 1200–1400 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 99.2.6

Hand-woven Inca belt with “S” design  
Camelid fiber, natural dyes  
Peru, 1400–1532 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2004.10.1



Hand-woven Inca belt-bag  
Camelid fiber, natural dyes  
Chile, Far North Coast, 1200–1450 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2002.7.8



Hand-woven belt  
Camelid fiber, natural dyes?  
Peru, Southern Highlands, 20th century  
Gift of Katherine H. Nunez, GTM 2004.2.1



Hand-woven yardage  
Cotton, natural and synthetic dyes  
Peru, 20th century  
Courtesy of Amy H. Winter





Feathered mummy bundle mask  
 Feather, cloth  
 Peru, Tiahuanaco, 600–1000 AD  
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Menser, GTM 98.4

## Andean Featherwork

The feathers used in these ancient Peruvian objects come from only a few varieties of birds and mostly from east of the Andes. Common feathers are those of the macaw (both red and blue varieties), parrot, Muscovy duck, and curassow. Macaw feathers are the most common. The brightest feathers come from newly moulted birds.

The feathers are usually attached to a textile base that is usually a plain weave double-warped cotton cloth. As such, featherwork is categorized as weaving. Most feather pieces that have been recovered have come from the Chimu area of the North Coast of Peru, like the Mummy Mask pictured here. Chancay, of the Central Coast, is another slightly less common source of featherwork.

Feathers are sometimes glued but most often attached by folding the end of the quill over and hanging it on a cord. Each folded quill is then tied with a second cord using an overhand knot thus producing a string of feathers which are then attached to the textile with a third cord. The feathers, whether glued or sewn, are applied in overlapping rows.

Sometimes the feathers are treated with tapirage, a process where feathers are removed from a young bird's skin, which is then rubbed with frog blood to create new feathers in different colors as they grow in again.

Feathers are fragile but remain well preserved if they are not exposed to excessive light or heat.



Four featherwork diamond pattern appliqués  
 Feather, fiber  
 Inca, Peru, 1200–1400 AD  
 Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 99.2.10



Large Kente cloth  
Silk, hand-woven strips  
Akan, Ghana, 20th century  
Anonymous loan



Kente cloth, hand-woven on a strip loom  
Cotton  
Ghana, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Hand-woven scarf with traditional patterns  
(made for export and the tourist trade)  
Silk  
Vietnam, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp

Hand-woven scarf with traditional patterns  
(made for export and the tourist trade)  
Cotton, rayon thread  
Laos, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



## Jacquard Fabrics

Jacquard looms are based on the “drawloom” originally used in China. The drawloom has many heddles lifted with the help of several assistants known as “drawboys.” In the 19th century, Joseph-Marie Jacquard, a French silk weaver, invented a way of lifting the heddles using a punch card system. This made weaving of intricate fabrics quick, easy and cheap. Fancy fabrics, used for Paisley shawls like those in the catalogue, became accessible to the middle and working classes.

Jacquard fabrics combine plain, twill and satin weaves. When colors are used, the fabric may look like embroidery or a hand-woven tapestry, like the shawl seen on the next page, and this technique is often used to imitate those more costly fabrics. Shown here are a late 19th-century weaving showing Chinese architecture in a landscape and a selection of paisley fabrics.



Chinese landscape with architecture  
Jacquard woven, silk  
Paterson, New Jersey, ca. 1885  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



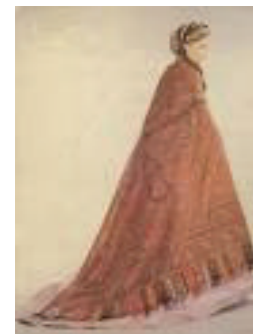
Hand-woven tapestry shawl  
Wool  
Paisley, Scotland, 17th – 18th century  
Courtesy of Margaret Liebling

## Paisley Shawls

Shawls have been woven in Kashmir since about the eleventh century, but the industry producing what we refer to as a Kashmir shawl is thought to have begun during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During the fifteenth century Persian replaced Sanskrit as the official language and the word shawl derives from the Persian ‘shal,’ denoting a class of woven fabric rather than an article of dress. During its history Kashmir had Mughal, Afghan and Sikh invasions, all of which left their influence stylistically on the shawls.

The Mughals of the Central Asian steppes conquered Kashmir in 1586. Under their rule the arts blossomed and shawl industries grew. Weavers came from Eastern Turkestan and employed the type of weave later used for Kashmir shawls. Up to this time Persian men had woven narrow waist girdles of shawl fabric, as part of male dress, and the Indians wove wide shoulder mantles, which were given as prestigious gifts. From ca. 1775, travelers, explorers, military personnel and members of the East India Company, appreciating their beauty and warmth, brought shawls back from Kashmir as presents.

During the 100 years the shawl was in fashion, its shape changed to suit the dresses with which it was worn. From 1770-1810 simple high-waisted white muslin dresses became fashionable. With these neo-Classical dresses, simple long light stoles with narrow borders and deeper woven ends or small one-yard squares with narrow borders folded into a triangle were worn.



The 1820's saw great changes to the industry. Dresses were of silk, still with high-ish waists but with bodice detailing such as pintucks and wide puff sleeves, which required a larger shawl. With the Jacquard loom, shawls could be woven in one piece with much bolder design and more colours.

During the 1830's the skirt got larger, balanced by huge sleeves, until by 1840 several starched white petticoats or a horsehair petticoat were worn, replaced in 1856 by whalebone hoops or the crinoline frame. With widening skirts the shawl really became popular, with every better class trousseau including one.

In Norwich, Paisley, Glasgow and other centres, printed shawls were also made and were immensely popular. Printers copied the designs of the the woven examples, using wooden blocks and later blocks with the pattern lines inlaid with metal. The blocks could of course be interchanged to produce an infinite number of designs. Later, roller-printed shawls were produced. Millions of shawls were printed for the mass market on wool and cotton and wool and silk grounds.

A combination of events led to the decline of popularity of the shawl in the early 1870's. A shawl could not fall very successfully down the back with the bustle, that rear wired protrusion which became so fashionable at the time. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 halted exports of shawls from Kashmir, resulting in the collapse of the industry. By 1870 a woven Jacquard shawl could be bought for £1 and an identical patterned cotton shawl for a few shillings. As shawls became so inexpensive that every woman could afford to own at least one, nobody wanted to wear to wear them.



Machine-woven shawl with embroidery  
Silk and wool  
Kashmir, ca. 1900  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 92.7.38



Machine-woven shawl  
Wool  
Kashmir, ca. 1900  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 92.7.37



## Knitting

Knitting is a method of creating fabric by interlooping yarns. Knit items have a certain amount of flexibility, since the loops can change shape by lengthening or widening. Knitting appears to have developed much later than weaving, but its place and time of origin are unknown.

### Pre-knitting

The earliest form of looped cloth was created by “nalbinding,” also called single-needle knitting, pseudo-knitting or cross-knitting. From the Danish, nalbinding literally means binding with a needle. The technique uses an eyed needle to pass short lengths of yarn through interconnected loops. The earliest examples from ca. 4,500 BC were found in the Judean desert. Other Neolithic specimens have been found worldwide.

Single-needle knitting was used in pre-Columbian Peru by the Nazca culture (100 BC–700 AD) to finish the fringes of woven cloths and to create decorative collar and belt-like structures. The intricate work often depicts human and animal figures. A sample of a Peruvian fringe textile is included in this section.

### True Knitting

True knitting developed from nalbinding in Egypt and was brought to Spain by Arabic nomads. The earliest knitting needle was made of copper wire with a hook at one end, similar in appearance to modern crochet hooks. As Christianity spread, knitting spread with it, even traveling to South America with the Conquistadors in the 16th century.

In medieval Europe, hand knitting became an important industry controlled by guilds; the first was founded in 1527 in Paris. Knitting was originally an occupation for men only, but later became a woman’s household activity. It was used to make fitted socks and stockings. During the 16th century, men wore short trunks, so fitted stockings were a fashion necessity for the wealthy. The first machine to knit stockings, driven by steam, was invented in 1589. By the 19th century, knitting machines were driven by water power, and in the 20th century by electricity. This led to the demise of hand-knitted socks in Europe. However, the first sweaters were knit in the 17th century and to this day hand-knitting has continued as a cottage industry, a leisure activity, and a personal means of making personal and family clothing.

Different knitting patterns and styles developed in different parts of the world. Illustrated are an indigenous Peruvian hat and Irish “Aran” cable-knit sweater that illustrate different styles. In Peru, caps are knit by men as a rite of passage to adulthood, and the caps of married and unmarried men differ.

Originally, hand-knit garments were seen as the province of the poor. As fewer women in industrialized societies knit, hand-knit garments, particularly those with ethnic origins, have taken on a new status and are desired by the wealthy. In some parts of the world co-operatives have been set up to support hand-knitters. However, the popularity of hand-crafted ethnic knits has led to the production of cheap machine-made copies that have largely replaced originals.



Hat  
Wool  
Peru, ca. 1900-1950  
Gift of Katherine H. Nunez  
GTM 2004.2.6



Hand-knit sweater with shawl collar  
Wool  
Isle of Aran, Ireland, ca. 1950s  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Fringe, single-needle knitting  
Cotton  
Peru, Proto-Nazca, 100 BC–700 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2002.7.19



## Crocheting

Crocheted fabric is an interlooped structure built upon a chain foundation. Crocheting is a simple yet versatile technique requiring only a hook and a yarn. Various stitches are possible and a variety of textures and patterns can be created. The craft has been practiced by both men and women in many countries and adapted to local materials and requirements.

The word *crochet* comes from *croche*, Middle French for hook. It probably evolved from *tambour*, an older form of Turkish chain-stitch embroidery made with a fine crochet-like hook. True crochet occurred when the backing was discarded and the stitches became independent.

It is possible that crochet developed independently in South America, before 1500 AD. To this day, Peruvian and Mayan men crochet shoulder bags to carry seeds in planting season, coca leaves for energy, and food. An example of such a bag is illustrated here.

In 19th-century Europe, crochet became a leisure activity for women. Much of the work was made with fine, white thread as an imitation of more expensive lace forms. In Ireland, crocheting became a cottage industry to supplement family income during the potato famine.

In the mid-20th century, thicker yarn was used. This is illustrated in an afghan throw of bright-colored granny squares and three doilies shown on the following pages. Avant-garde designers Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier integrate crochet work into their apparel. One of the most common current uses of crochet can be seen in the *kufi* caps worn by Muslim men.



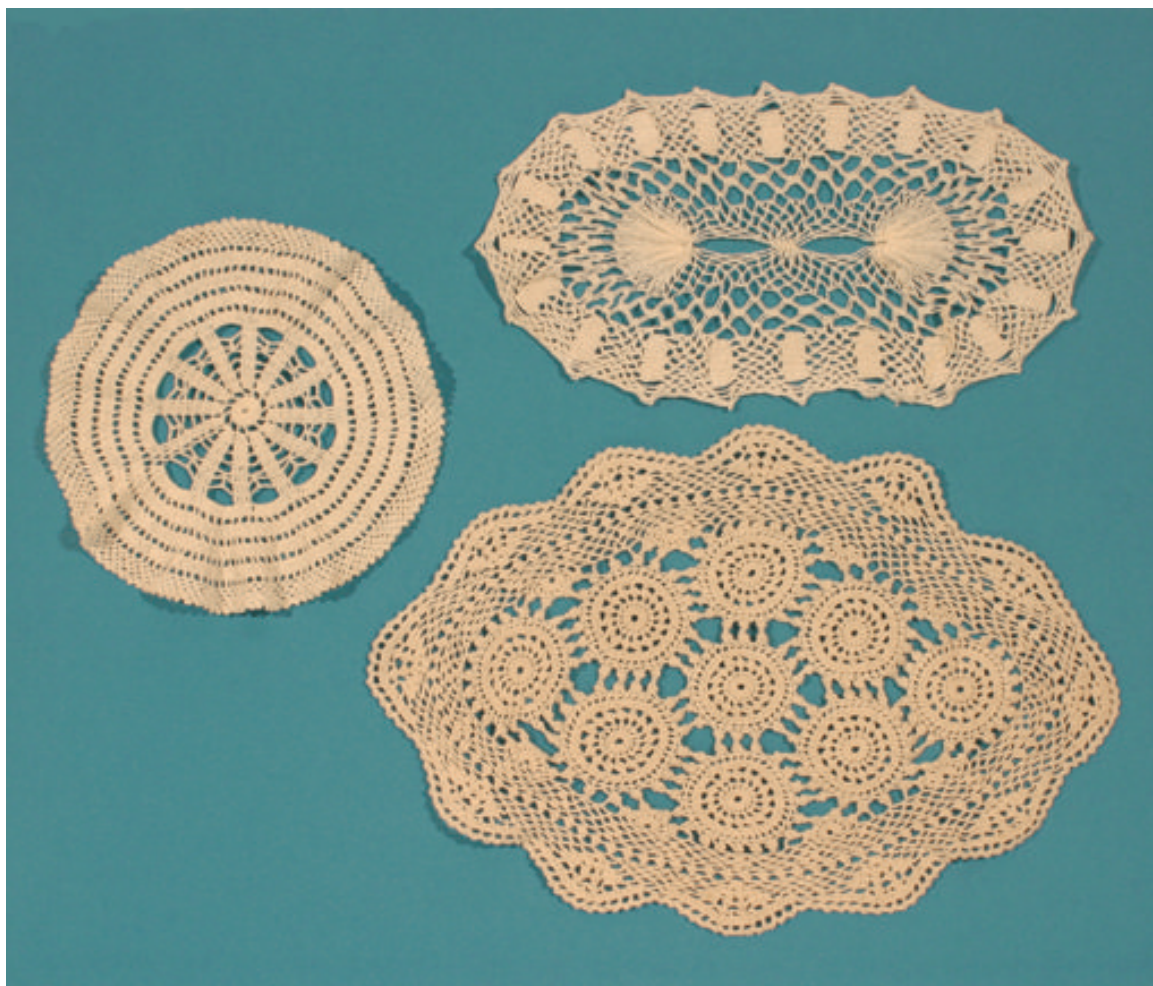
The production of crochet has not been mechanized. In some Asian countries crocheted garments, belts and bags are made by workers paid minimum wages in factory-like conditions. In Ireland, Greece and the Balkan states, crocheting is a cottage industry. In parts of Pakistan and other countries, cooperatives have been established to help local people produce and market crocheted wares.

Hand-crocheted food or seed bag

Cotton or yarn

Peru, 20th century

Gift of Katherine H. Nunez, GTM 2004.2.7



Doilies  
Cotton  
United States, mid-20th century  
Courtesy of Amy H. Winter



Granny-square throw  
Acrylic  
England, ca. 1970s  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



## Designs Created by Embroidery



Child's cloth hat  
Fiber, buttons, beads, coral, silver, brass  
Swat, Afghanistan, 20th century  
Gift of Eric Jacobsen, GTM 98.4.7

Embroidery is the embellishment of fabric worked in thread with a needle. Its origins are unknown, but ancient examples survive from all corners of the globe. Time consuming and expensive, it was only available to the rich until the invention of the embroidery machine in 1828.

Today hand embroidery continues as a cottage industry, creating ethnic items for personal use and sale; and in specialty work commissioned by fashion designers like Dior. Renewed interest in embroidery as a hobby has helped to preserve traditional designs. Embroidery thread varies with culture, style and fabric used. The most common types, seen on display in both sections of the catalogue, include

- silk, in the Chinese embroidered robe
- wool, in the Mexican and Afghani coats and the Coptic textiles
- cotton, in the Middle Eastern robes and in home furnishings
- metallic wires and threads, in the haute couture and high fashion designs and the Turkish shawl

Countless types of stitches are used, but most are variations of four kinds: knotted, flat, looped and couching.

- knotted stitches leave a raised dotted effect
- flat stitches (running, satin and cross stitches) lie flat on the fabric surface
- looped stitches (chain stitches) hold each subsequent stitch in place
- couching stitches attach a thick or decorative thread to fabric, like gold wire, by sewing it in place with a different thread

Of note among our examples is Kuba cloth from the Republic of the Congo. It is made from the natural fiber raffia and embroidered in a cut-pile stitch, with areas of the embroidery similar to the pile of a hand-made carpet. But Kuba cloth is utilized for clothing, now primarily for ceremonial use. It is also a currency form.

Also illustrated on the cover (and page 51) is an example of Chinese hand embroidery that uses satin stitch to fill spaces and create floral and pictorial designs, employing silk thread on silk fabric. Satin stitch in acrylic yarn decorates the cuffs of the Mexican coat in the Costume section. Satin stitches in gold on the Turkish shawl combine with pulled-thread stitch to create the designs. As is apparent, different fabrics and threads create entirely different appearances.

Chain stitch, evident in the Middle Eastern woman's coat (pp. 58-59), is one of the oldest stitches. Because it is easy to do and versatile, it is widely used as an outline stitch or to fill in spaces and create blocks of color. In India, where it is often produced with a tambour hook, it resembles crocheting. Chain stitch can also be produced by machine and much Indian "craftwork" on sale in the West is actually machine-made.

Cross-stitch embroidery is one of the oldest types of embroidery and the most popular form world-wide, done with X-shaped stitches to form an image or design. Different areas of the globe devised their own distinct style, stitch and color combinations, as is apparent in the cross-stitched Bedouin and Palestinian robes (pp. 46-47). The earliest known cross-stitch sampler in the United States was created by Plymouth colonist Loara Standish around 1653. An example of an 18th-century cross-stitch sampler from the Museum's collection (p. 128) provides a wonderful example of such work.

Some of the finest and most sophisticated embroidery was created by Native Americans of Paracas, an ancient Peruvian culture of the 1st century BC seen on the opposite page. Like their Asian counterparts, these designs are not simply decorative but represent an entire pictorial language.



Textile border with owl deity  
Camelid fiber  
Paracas, Peru, ca. 200 BC–100 AD  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2003.10.3



Woven decorative fringed  
strip with demonic beings  
Camelid fiber  
Paracas, Peru, 1st century BC  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 98.4.1



Kuba cloth  
Raffia  
Shoowa Kuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, early 20th c.  
Gift of Stark and Michael Ward  
Godwin-Ternbach Museum, 2006.14.48, 2006.14.51



Reverse appliqué mola  
Cotton, synthetic dyes  
Panama, Kuna tribe, early 20th century  
Courtesy of Dennis Cady



Hand-made decorative tunic fragment with medallion  
center decorated with putti, animals and heads  
Wool, tapestry weave  
Coptic Egypt, 4th–5th century AD  
Gift of Ernest Erickson, GTM 61.81



Textile fragment with birds and fish on border,  
two figures and tree in center  
Wool tapestry weave  
Coptic Egypt, 4th–5th century AD  
Museum purchase, GTM 61.66



Needlework wing chair cover depicting mythological scene  
Wool  
England, ca. 1700  
Gift of Judge Irwin Untermeyer, GTM 63.6



Pair of needlework pictures  
Cotton  
English, Elizabethan, 1533–1603  
Gift of Judge Irwin Untermeyer, GTM 58.70



Cross-stitched sampler  
Linen, cotton thread, dated 1752  
Gift of Katherine H. Nunez, GTM 2005.2.2



Hand-woven shawl  
Linen, rayon and gold metallic thread, pulled-thread,  
tapestry and satin stitch, beads  
Turkey, ca. 1910  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 92.7.36

## Designs Created by Applying Color

### Fabric Daubing and Painting

Hand-painted textiles in this section include mud cloth from Mali, a textile from the Chavin culture of ancient Peru (1000–200 BC), and a modern cloth from the Amazon River region. The paint on the Chavin fabric, colored with a natural mineral pigment mixed with oil, remains on the surface and is vulnerable to abrasion and wear.

The earliest textiles were colored with mineral, animal and plant extracts. Techniques that were used to paint caves were probably adapted to decorate textiles. Most likely, early designs were daubed on animal hides using the fingers or sticks; later, brushes were used to paint on more delicate materials.

From this rudimentary beginning developed a range of techniques, including block printing, stenciling, roller printing, screen printing, photo printing, ink-jet printing and resist-print methods such as *shibori*, *batik* and tie-and-dye. Mud cloth, a dye method unique to Mali, Africa, involves a complex process to prepare the a mud-based pigment, which is then applied to fabric with the fingers, leaving motif areas untouched. Mud cloth was seen as outdated and used only in rural areas until 1971 when Malian fashion designer Chris Seydou used it in his Paris collection. Thereafter it became popular among African Americans as a symbol of national and cultural pride. With popularity came dilution of authenticity and symbolic significance. Imitations of mud cloth for tourists and export trade like that at the right are created by using stencils or simply printed commercially in Mali or other countries.



L.  
Hand-woven and dyed (daubed) mud cloth belt  
(also known as *bògòlanfini*)  
Cotton  
Mali, West Africa, Bambara tribe, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Hand-painted Chavin textile section of a tunic  
Cotton, natural pigment  
Peru, South coast, Carowa, 1000–600 BC  
Gift of anonymous donor, GTM 2003.10.2



Hand-painted cloth  
Cotton, natural dyes  
Amazon River culture, 2005  
Courtesy of Amy H. Winter



## Resist Dyeing

Dyeing a fabric is the simplest means of achieving color and design. Natural or synthetic dyes are absorbed into the very structure of the fibers. However, dyeing a selected part of a fabric is difficult because dyes tend to run along the fibers. This led to the development of resist dyeing, where sections of cloth or yarn are protected from dye penetration by tying, stitching, or covering areas with wax, starch paste, mud or some other substance. Familiar examples of resist-dye patterning include batik and tie-and-dye. Resist-dyed fabric in Africa and Asia is often colored blue with indigo extract, one of the oldest plant dyes known to man.

### Tie-and-Dye and Stitch-Resist Dyeing

Tie-and-dye involves tightly binding up bunches of cloth or yarn. Traditional tie-and-dye textiles are found in Latin America, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Africa and Asia. They are known as *plangi* in Indonesia, *shibori* in Japan and *bandhani* in India. Bandhani was in such demand in the 18th century that “bandana” entered the English language as the word for kerchief. In the 1960s, tie-and-dye garments became popular with hippies in the Western world. *Ikat*, the process of dyeing yarns before weaving, was common throughout Asia. Two examples of ikat—a Middle Eastern caftan and an Indonesian bedspread—can be seen on the adjacent page and on pages 48-49.

In stitch-resist dyeing, cloth is sewn or gathered in folds by hand or by machine before it is dyed. The technique is commonly used in Indonesia, Japan and the countries of West Africa, to make fabric that is sold locally and internationally.

Tie-and-dye and stitch-dyed yardage from West Africa and Indonesia are found in the pages ahead.

### Batik and Starch-Resist Dyeing

The batik process involves painting or stamping designs onto the fabric with hot wax before immersing it in a dye vat. After the fabric is dyed, the wax is removed. To create a multicolored design, fabric is waxed and dyed several times. In Indonesia, intricate Hindu, Muslim and Chinese designs were painted with wax, and dye was applied between the waxed areas with a brush, evident in the examples at the right.

L.

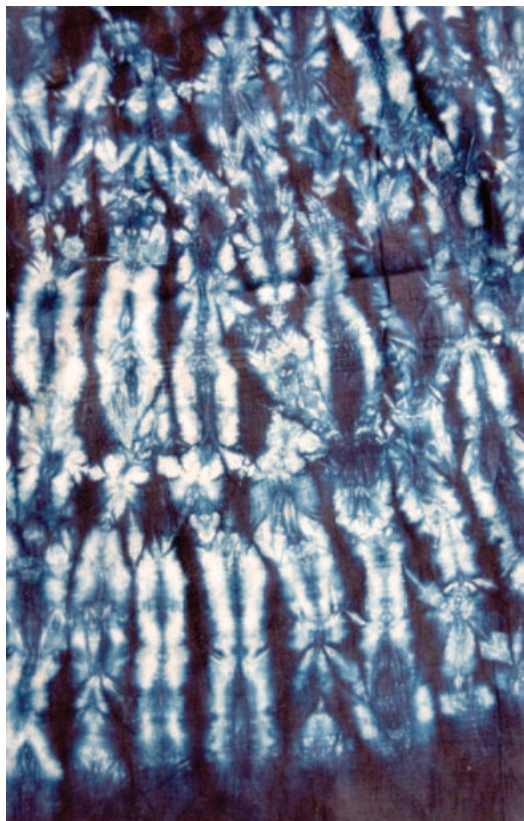
Hand-dyed *ikat* technique bedspread  
Indonesia, 20th century

Gift of Katherine H. Nunez, GTM 2005.2.1

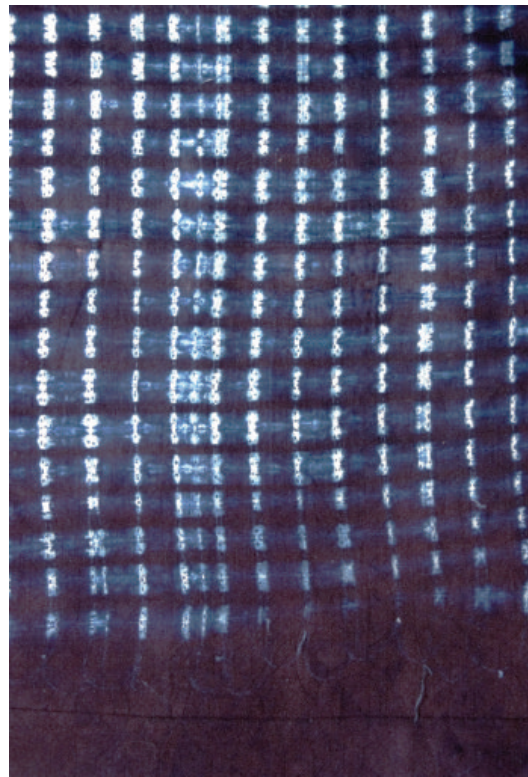


Batik fabric made by applying wax with block stamps is now made for the tourist trade; and yardage is factory-produced (in Indonesia, India, England and Holland) by applying wax with copper-engraved rollers (pp. 138-39). Although beautiful, comparison of these machine-made fabrics with hand-made batiks is telling. In the 19th century, European machine-made wax-print fabrics were exported to Indonesia, but considered inferior because spider web designs were left by cracked wax. However, these fabrics became popular in West Africa and are now made there and considered national dress.

The starch-paste resist process is similar to batik, but the wax is replaced by rice paste in Japan or corn-flour paste in Africa. The designs may be painted freehand or applied through a stencil. Included here is stitch-and-die yardage from Indonesia and West Africa and a Japanese bed or table cover done in the rice-paste technique. Further ahead on page 146 is a machine-printed copy of that cover.



L. and R.  
Stitch-and-dye yardage  
Cotton, indigo dye  
Gambia, West Africa, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Stitch-and-dye bed or table cover  
Cotton, indigo dye  
Japan, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Machine-waxed batik yardage  
Cotton  
Indonesia, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Machine -waxed batik yardage  
Cotton  
Indonesia, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp

## Block Printing

Block printing is a quick, efficient and inexpensive way of creating repeatable design patterns. A design is carved into a block of wood, clay or other material, then coated with a colored substance and stamped onto a fabric. The designs can be one color or multicolored, representing exotic flora and fauna such as in chintz fabrics created in the early 17th century until the advent of mechanized printing. Multicolored designs require a different block for each color.

Block printing is an ancient craft. It developed in China over 2,000 years ago and independently in other places, including Pre-Columbian Peru and Mexico. Now practiced all over the world, India is most renowned for its printed and dyed cotton cloth, made since the 12th century. Even today, saris and bed and table covers are block printed on a commercial basis. An example of an Indian block-printed skirt can be seen below.

In the 17th century, printed fabric from the East threatened the textile weaving industry in Europe. As a result, importation and domestic production of printed textiles was banned until the middle of the 18th century.



Block-print skirt  
Cotton  
Indian co-operative, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



## Mechanized Fabric Printing

Mechanization allows for the printing of large quantities of fabric at great speed. A huge variety of different designs can be produced to cater to the needs and aesthetic demands of all. When roller printing was introduced in England in 1783, prints once done by hand in six hours were produced in four minutes.

Printing is used to produce original designs but also to copy traditional designs from many cultures, making affordable imitations of costly hand-crafted textiles. Several different methods of printing fabric exist, but it is difficult to determine which method was used by simply looking at it. Examples of machine-printed fabrics often copy traditional hand-made fabrics. Other newer technologies not illustrated in this catalogue are described below.

### Roller Printing

Roller printing, developed around 1785, is a mechanical improvement on block printing. A separate dye paste for each color is applied to the fabric from a metal roller, then engraved or etched according to the design. While the process is fast and efficient, set up and etching of the rollers is time-consuming, costly and difficult.

### Screen Printing

Screen printing, developed in the early years of the 20th century, is the process of forcing a pigment paste or dye through a fine woven fabric stretched on a frame. Each color requires a separate screen. Areas not meant to be printed are protected by blocking the mesh of the screen. By use of light sensitive emulsions, a photograph also can be used to prepare a screen. Screen printing can be done by hand, on an automated flat bed, or with the use of rotary screens. Approximately 80% of fabrics in the US market are screen printed.

### Ink-jet Printing

Ink-jet printing is a computerized process similar to that used by home printers. It is used primarily on carpets, pile fabrics and towels, and for small fabric design samples.

### Heat-transfer Printing

In heat-transfer printing, designs are transferred to fabric by heat and pressure from a paper printed with a disperse dye. The dye evaporates and recondenses as a solid in the fabric. This method of printing is appropriate for polyester, nylon, acrylic, acetate, resin-treated natural fabrics and knits, to produce clear sharp designs.

### Photographic Printing

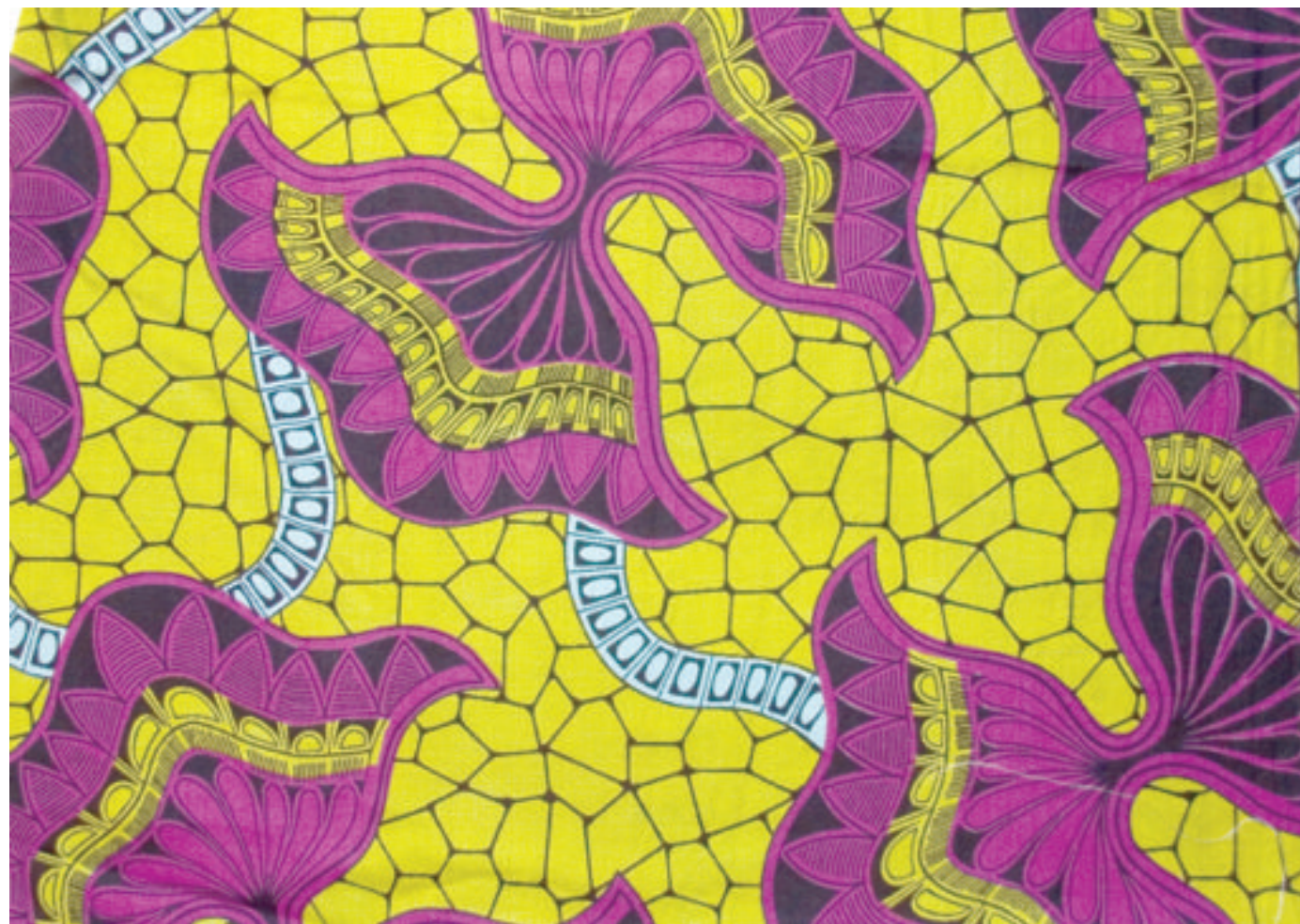
Photographic printing coats fabric with a photosensitive emulsion and then treats it like photographic paper.

Machine-printed cotton yardage

with honey-ant design

Australia, 20th century

Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Machine-printed yardage  
Cotton  
West Africa, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Machine-printed yardage with symbols of the U.S.A.  
Cotton  
India, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp



Machine-printed yardage  
Cotton  
Japan, 20th century  
Courtesy of Julia Sharp

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p. 19, Fig. 14 *Charioteer of Delphi*, 475-470 BCE, Delphi Museum, Courtesy of Saskia Ltd., © Dr. Ron Wiedenhoeft

p. 25 *Nike Tying Her Sandal*, ca. 410-407 BCE, Acropolis Museum, Courtesy of Saskia Ltd., © Dr. Ron Wiedenhoeft

p. 41 Eishi Chobunsai (1756-1829), Carriage Scene with Four Women, color woodcut, Japan, Togukawa period (Edo) 1790-1804, Gift of Mrs. Charles B. Scully, GTM 57.15

p. 57 IRAN: Persepolis: Section two of the panorama of the lower register of the right side of the Apadana Stairway, 1935-36 Excavation Season, Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

p. 67 Courtesy of Elizabeth D. Lowe and the Queens College Fashion Association

p. 75 Cornelis Janssens van Ceulin (1593-1664), Portrait of a Nobleman, oil on wood, Gift of Dr. Joseph Schoneman, GTM 60.41

p. 84-85 Textiles and weavers, Chinchero, Peru, Courtesy of El Centro de Textiles Tradicionales de Cusco, Nilda Callañaupa, Director

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Lakis Gavalas (.LAK), Sarakatsana Dress, p. 13 (Fig. 10), 30

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