

European Galleries, Costume and Textiles, June 17, 2019-December 1, 2019

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

French

Dress, ca. 1817

Silk twill with self-weft-float patterning, padded silk-satin

Gift of William Ely 37.339

This restrained silk dress hovers between Empire and Romantic styles. The high waist, defined just under the wearer's bust, is a signature of Empire-era dress, popular between 1790 and 1815. The dress's heavier-weight silk twill, its open bateau neckline, and its corded silk-satin trim at the cuffs and hem all move toward the Renaissance Revival look of Romantic-era dress popular in the 1830s.

At the hem, motifs of abstracted cyprus trees and palmette designs evoke the patterning found in imported textiles—in particular the Kashmiri wool shawls Napoleon's soldiers accessed through new trade streams and brought back to France.



Italian; Sicilian

Textile fragment, 1600s

Silk

Gift of Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss 43.367

This silk fragment portrays tulips woven in gold-wrapped thread. The floral bouquets repeat in alternating directions and appear geometric with the linearity of their petals, leaves, and crossing stems.



This textile probably originated in Sicily, an area long fought over by Christian and Islamic empires. Native to Central Asia, tulips were a popular motif for Sicilian merchants and weavers under the Ottoman

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Empire in the 1600s. The broad lines of these flowers resemble Kufic script, another marker of deep Islamic influence in the region.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has an identical fragment in their collection.

Spanish

Textile fragment, ca. 1500

Silk satin weave, plain weave, and supplementary weft

Gift of Houghton P. Metcalf 24.001

As Spain began colonizing the Americas in the 1490s, big changes were also taking place on the Iberian Peninsula, including the end of several centuries of Muslim rule and the banishment of Jews. These red, black, and green silk textile fragments—probably woven after the 1492 fall of Spain’s last Islamic kingdom, the Nasrid dynasty of Granada—suggest the robust palette of Nasrid-style textiles. Abstracted *boteh* motifs, which inspired today’s paisley pattern, reference the tree of life in Islamic tradition as they frame repeated pairs of lions. Converging between the climbing animals are spiraling tendrils, each topped with a stylized pomegranate (“granada” in Spanish).

Complex silk weaving techniques brought to Spain by Muslim weavers flourished from the 800s into the 1500s, with Moorish weavers producing luxurious lengths for courtly purposes.



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Spanish

Textile fragment, ca. 1475-1525

Silk compound satin weave

Gift of Ugo Jandolo 32.195

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Italian

Chasuble, 1600s

Silk damask with wrapped metallic supplementary weft (brocade),
appliquéd metallic gimp trim with silver gilt thread

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 07.154A

Dynamic red fabric takes center stage in this garment made for a priest to wear during Mass. Luminous silver gilt threads add dimension to the floral motifs while yellow-green silk floss accents the vegetation. The maker added further depth to the design by combining red silk warp threads with white silk weft threads to create a shadowy repeated image. This method of weaving and the style of the vegetation are very much in conversation with silks imported from China and Persia—evidence of the rich visual exchange active in Italy in the 1600s.

