

Subject to Change: Art and Design in the 20th Century

December 13, 2010-July 19, 2011

Because of their sensitivity to light, the garments and textiles on view in *Subject to Change: Art and Design in the 20th Century* must be changed every five months. The current installation has been curated by the Faculty Fellow in the department of Costume and Textiles, Fall 2010, Anne Emlein. Critic Anne Emlein teaches machine knitting, textiles for apparel, and fine-arts textile courses in the Textiles department at RISD, as well as hand knitting and pattern drafting for knits in RISD CE. As the Faculty Fellow in the department of Costume and Textiles, Fall 2010, Emlein has explored knitwear history and production, in addition to teaching from the collection. Throughout the gallery you will find her unique perspective as an artist and teacher on some of her favorite objects from the collection, discovered in storage during her fellowship explorations behind the scenes in Costume and Textiles.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

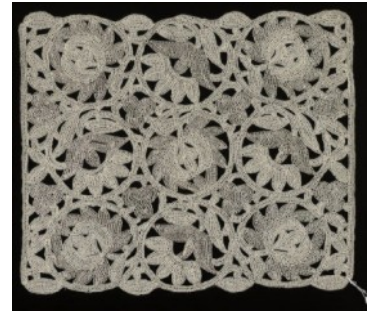
French; American

Textile length, first quarter 1900s

Wool, silk, cotton; interlooped

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.098.5

The work of an unknown designer, this lace textile is unusual in many regards. Not only is the scale of the motifs exceptionally large for traditional lace, the negative spaces, or voids, create equally important shapes as the motifs themselves. The use of two different materials, fuzzy wool and lustrous silk, further distinguish the individual motifs and lend a sense of dimensionality to the piece. In knitting or crochet, the single interconnected looping technique creates the individual units that make up the entire piece, thus reinforcing the modular yet cohesive composition of this intriguing textile.



Best and Co., American, 1879 - 1971, retailer

Hat, ca. 1935

Straw, cotton, silk, mother-of-pearl, beads; plaited, net, velvet, appliqué

Gift of Teri Noel Towe 1994.075.002

This hat can be viewed as a fashion piece, an innovative textile structure, or simply an intriguing object. The negative space separating the individual plaited straw rosettes defines this object and accentuates their bold scale in relation to the overall size of the hat. The somewhat unexpected choice of the small plastic flowers



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that sit atop the rosettes add a playful, informal touch to the look, which is then reined in by the severity of the black velvet trimmed edge and the later addition of the black veil.

Jack Lenor Larsen, American, b. 1927, designer
Larsen Design Studio, American, 1958-present, design label
Interplay, 1962
Saran monofilament warp knitted
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 1996.105.1

Though traditional in appearance, this window curtain, designed by Jack Lenor Larson in 1962, was made using a warp knit lace fabric of synthetic fiber. Combining a new fiber, Saran monofilament, with the unexpected application of the machine-made warp knitting technique, Larson masterfully merged pattern, color, and texture. Notice also the braided silk trim on the 1901 dress at the opposite end of the gallery, and the braided straw hat from 1935 in the small display case. All three examples, while fabricated in different fibers and techniques, share the same sheen, and illustrate the many ways in which texture can be used as a design element.



Gustav Kalhammer, Austrian, 1886-1919, designer
Wiener Werkstätte, Austrian, 1903-1932, manufacturer
Gloggnitz, 1910-11
Cotton; plain weave, block printed
Jesse Metcalf Fund 1998.80.2

Designed by Gustav Kalhammer of the Wiener Werkstätte, this textile embodies a beguiling set of design elements that merge to create timeless visual intrigue. Created using a simple block printing method on a very common cotton fabric, the recognizable yet stylized plant forms create a repeating pattern of diagonals and horizontals. The sharp contrast of black and white further energizes the overall pattern. Notice that the background, or negative space, has been printed, leaving the white cotton fabric to represent the simple plant motifs.



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Bianchini, Férier, French, est. 1888, manufacturer

Textile length, 1920s

Silk; plain weave, warp printed

Gift of Dr. Louis J. Cella, Jr. 1999.7.5

The design elements in this lustrous and elegant fabric create a sense of lively juxtaposition. As if hand-sketched directly onto the fabric, the floral motifs are large scale and casually strewn about, which suggests informality. Due to the slight shifting of the printed warp during the weaving process, the drawn lines take on a slightly out-of-focus quality, which, when paired with the luminosity of the silk and the black/white color scheme, brings an undertone of formality to the design as a whole.



American

Summer suit, ca. 1900

Linen; plain weave, embroidered, cut and drawn work

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Stone 2000.66.8

The simplicity and clean lines of this summer suit are reinforced by the graphic quality of the eyelet embroidery as well as by the pure white linen, which gives off an air of freedom and ease. The combination of material, color, motifs, and garment shape of this ensemble merge to create a fresh new look.



Alabama Chanin, American, 2006-present, design label

Natalie Chanin, American, b. 1961, designer

Catherine Rutherford, American, embroiderer

Caroline Givens, American, embroiderer

Dress, Fall 2007

Organic cotton; jersey-knit, appliquéd, embroidered, hand-sewn

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2008.44

Constructed of American-grown organic white cotton, Natalie Chanin's simple yet beguiling jersey-knit dress uses a variety of fabric manipulations and embellishment techniques. First, basic floral motifs are printed with white pigments on white cotton knit; next, these floral designs are appliquéd with the same fabric; finally, the floral designs and background fabric are heavily stitched and gathered to create a multi-textured surface reminiscent of traditional lace. Through her use of basic materials and textile techniques, Chanin has captured a raw and edgy attitude, softened by a distinctly feminine silhouette, all in white.



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Raoul Dufy, French, 1877-1953, designer
Bianchini, Férier, French, est. 1888, manufacturer
Apparel textile length, ca.1912
Silk; satin weave, printed
Museum Works of Art Fund 51.470



In 1910, Raoul Dufy created a series of woodcuts to illustrate Guillaume Apollinaire's *La Bestiaire*. His bold style received immediate acclaim by fashion designer Paul Poiret, who provided Dufy with a studio in which to print textiles for Poiret's use. Dufy's designs were so successful that France's leading silk manufacturer, Bianchini, Férier, signed him to a contract in 1912. Dufy designed for the firm until 1928. The vigor and spontaneity of lines and layout are emblematic of Dufy's approach to modernist design. The textile also references some of the outside influences that inspired Dufy, such as the graphic designs of the Wiener Werkstätte, and the reductive floral forms used by Charles Rennie MacKintosh and other artists of the British Arts & Crafts movement.

American
Evening dress, ca. 1930
Cotton; lace
Gift of Mrs. Albert E. Simonson 57.088.2

Fluid, sinuous floral vines cover the sheer surface of this otherwise understated tank style evening dress. Gravity seems to pull down the lace overlay, which is then supported by the voluminous and architectural flounce attached to the lower portion of the dress. Through color, motion, and an uneven handkerchief hemline, a sense of balance is restored to this simple yet elegant gown.



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American

Dress, ca. 1901

Silk, cotton; rib weave, moiré, lace, velvet, braiding, embroidered, appliqué

Gift of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities
59.095.74

An overall surface pattern known as moiré plays across the silk of this gown in shadow-like movements where the chrysanthemum motifs have been pressed into the fabric. This slight color shift adds to a quality of lightness that contrasts with the areas of solid lace and heavy embellishment. The informality of the straw-like braided trim and the playfulness of the pink-collar ribbon lend an amusing touch to this otherwise serious ensemble.



American

Evening dress, 1948

Silk; plain weave, pleated

Gift of Mrs. Elisha Dyer 60.006.3

This silk taffeta evening gown, devoid of any surface pattern or texture, relies on fabric manipulation and light and shadow to create contrast and volume. Depending on the topography of the body to serve as structural support, the gown's weighty silk taffeta follows each curve of the wearer's unique physique. Ornamental pleated extensions, which are no doubt set into motion when the wearer walks, reinforce the importance of the body's role in creating form.



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French

Evening dress, ca. 1926

Silk, rhinestones, faux pearls; crepe yarn, plain weave, embroidered
Gift of the estate of Mary Blumer 63.044.3

In the 1920s women's dresses were typified by a simple, short, columnar shape and worn with cropped hair and a close-fitting cloche hat. This style not only signaled mobility and democratization, but also mirrored the geometries of Modernist aesthetics evident in the work of Raymond Duchamp-Villon (see adjacent sculpture), among others. The flat, tubular dress surfaces made perfect "canvases" for decorative experimentation that catered to the mass market as well as to an elite clientele. This lively dress with a trompe-l'oeil embroidered faux pearl necklace was made for a woman presumably ready to embody the living language of the Jazz Age.



Clifford Gastler, American, 1941-2000, (RISD 1964, Apparel)

Wedding dress, 1964

Paper, cloth flowers, synthetic net; non woven, appliquéd
Gift of the Apparel Design Department, Rhode Island School of Design
64.053.3

This unique wedding gown, designed by a RISD alum, is made of paper donated by the paper manufacturing company Kimberly Clark. Due to the ephemeral nature of its materials, the garment shows signs of deterioration and of discoloration from the aging paper glue used in construction. Cleverly bringing everyday materials into the realm of high fashion, the gown offers an amusing commentary on the pop culture of the 1960s.

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American

Evening dress, ca. 1970

Nylon, faux pearls, rhinestones; machine lace, plain weave, appliqué
Gift of Mrs. Reuben Horowitz 77.136.4

Supported by a structure of nylon, daisy-patterned lace, this dress's surface is entirely encrusted with pearls, rhinestones, and brilliants. The countless rhinestones send glittering sparks in all directions, creating dazzling light and a sense of weightlessness that defies the heft of the garment. Surprisingly, the rows of nylon ruffles appliquéd at the hem seem to lift this weighty dress right off the floor.



American

Dress, ca. 1928

Mohair, fur, silk; lace knit

Museum Collection S84.135

It is said that traditional Shetland lace shawls, often knitted for a bride, were made of such fine materials that one could draw them through a wedding band. This ethereal dress, constructed of several hand-knitted Shetland lace shawls, ingeniously uses the different stitch patterns of the individual shawls as various parts of the dress. The placement of these repeating patterns highlights the garment's shape and complements the wearer's form. The addition of the fur trim to the sleeves adds a touch of wintry elegance to a wedding dress that was presumably a labor of love.

