

Ottoman Turkish Interior Textiles from the Aldrich Collection, January 22, 2016–July 17, 2016

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, works like these decorated Turkish domestic interiors. A typical upper-class home during the late Ottoman Empire was furnished in divans scattered with cushions and textiles embroidered in gold and silk floral motifs.

Many Americans were first introduced to the aesthetic of Turkish arts at the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia. Soon opulent Turkish-inspired smoking rooms and parlors were very much in fashion even in relatively conservative New England, and Turkish textiles became widely collected by Lucy Truman Aldrich, Mrs. Gustav Radeke, and other Providence collectors.

At the same time, the motifs, textures, and trims of the Ottoman Empire were being translated by Western dressmakers into sumptuous layered women's ensembles. Examples of this "upholstered" look—and of the ongoing Western fascination with Turkish motifs and materials—can be seen in the adjacent Donghia Costume and Textiles Gallery.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Ottoman Turkish

Textile hanging, 1800s

Silk satin compound weave, with continuous and discontinuous supplementary weft patterning tied in twill

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.244

This elaborately patterned hanging, made for an architectural niche, would also have found domestic use. The heavy red weave is brocaded in yellow, green, and blue silk; in the center is a vase of flowers, with a dome and Turkish crescent above and lamps hanging in arches below. Star and floral motifs fill the borders.

One legacy of the 16th-century Ottoman textile artisans is the use of architectural details like those found in this 19th-century example, which suggests an Ottoman courtyard.



Ottoman Turkish

Altar cloth, 1800s

Wool, silk, metallic-wrapped yarn, metal sequin, cotton; twill weave with embroidery and appliqué, pieced

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.555

In this turquoise-blue textile, floral forms are heavily embellished in colored silk floss, gold-wrapped yarns, and shiny sequins. The blue silk fringe around three sides explains a later use of this work, as an altar cloth in a Christian church.



RISD MUSEUM

Although the overall design and craft is Turkish in style, the layout is a European-style repeat—not the more typical clustering of motifs in the borders. Sumru Belger Krody, senior curator at the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., suggests this work was made in Istanbul for a Christian clientele using Turkish Rococo motifs and techniques.

Ottoman Turkish

Pillow cover, late 1700s-early 1800s

Linen, silk; plain weave, embroidery (atma stitch, double running stitch, satin stitch)

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.558

The line borders, narrow rectangular shape, and non-reversible stitching indicate that this textile was originally lined and used as a pillow or bolster cover. The palette and airy design suggest it was made in the late 18th or early 19th century.

This example is embellished in *atma* stitching—a particularly labor- and material-intensive technique most commonly found in Ottoman textiles of the late 17th to late 18th centuries.



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Ottoman Turkish

Napkin or Yağlık, late 1700s-early 1800s

Cotton plain weave with silk- and metallic-yarn embroidery, trimmed with metallic needle lace

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.562.10

This towel is bordered in roses in full bloom, bud, profile, and full face. Roses were a common motif in Turkish and European embroideries of the 18th century. At about that time, Turkish needleworkers adopted the careful shading of colors seen in European woven silks.



Ottoman Turkish

Napkin or Yağlık, late 1700s

Cotton, silk, metallic yarn; plain weave, embroidery

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.562.4

During the 18th century, domestic Ottoman embroideries often revealed influences from Western Europe. In this piece, decorated in a double-running stitch, architectural niches frame the traditional Turkish motifs of cypress trees and urns filled with fruit.



Ottoman Turkish

Napkin or Yağlık, late 1800s

Cotton plain weave with silk- and metallic-yarn embroidery

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.562.5

A decorated napkin such as this one was a ceremonial object, placed on the lap of a guest at a meal but not generally used. The drawn work, called *muşabak*, is a feature of 19th-century Turkish embroideries. This technique, seen here around each blue flower, creates tiny open squares in the ground of the cloth, a delicate addition to dense floral motifs.



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Ottoman Turkish

Hanging or quilt cover, late 1600s-early 1700s

Linen plain weave with silk-yarn embroidery

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.563

Densely patterned in a palette of blue, red, green, and yellow, this hanging is one of the earliest Ottoman embroideries in the RISD Museum collection. It features several typically Turkish design elements: vertical serpentine bands with scale-like designs, artichoke palmettes, and the *çintamani* motif of three balls or crescents. This panel has been patched in several places, probably with pieces taken from its missing lower border.

