

Indische Style: Batiks For The International Market, March 20, 2015-July 5, 2015

Lucy Truman Aldrich collected more than 30 batiks while traveling in Indonesia in the 1920s. Batiks are patterned fabrics dyed using a traditional Indonesian wax-resist technique. The bright colors and innovative designs of these six indische-style examples set them apart from the muted indigos and browns of traditional court batiks.

Indische batiks were produced from the mid-19th century through the 1940s by female artisans who created an evolving aesthetic language by blending references from their Indonesian, Chinese, Arab, Dutch, and mixed backgrounds. The Dutch ruled Java from the early 17th century until the Indonesian Republic was formed in 1949, making European stylistic influences particularly prevalent.

Popular with Dutch, Indo-European, and Indo-Chinese women, indische-patterned batik sarongs offered relief from the stifling corseted and layered ensembles popular in Europe. Far more appropriate for the hot, humid climate of Indonesia, the sarong was wrapped around the body and worn with the kebaya, a blouse of fine white cotton decorated with lace, as seen in this unidentified Dutch woman's ensemble.

Until recently, indische batiks were considered a less desirable genre by many museums and collectors, namely due to the Western design motifs and bold color palettes achieved by use of synthetic dyes. The word indische refers to Europeans, primarily Dutch or Indo-Europeans, who had lived in the East Indies for a long time. Indische batik is also sometimes referred to as *beland* (Indonesian for "Holland") or fusion-style.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Indonesian
Sarong, ca. 1910
Cotton; batik, tiga negeri style
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.477



This elaborate sarong is the visual embodiment of the culture of Indonesia, whose official motto is Unity in Diversity. The sarong is made in the *tiga negeri* ("of three lands") style. The kepala, or head of the textile, is decidedly North Coast in design, with an asymmetrical floral bouquet with butterflies and diagonal nitik lines in the ground. The bouquet, adapted from the Indian tree-of-life motif, reflects Indonesian trade with India's Coromandel Coast over the course of centuries and the subsequent stylistic exchange between the two cultures. The symmetrical bow and lace borders were design elements introduced by Indo-European craftswomen.

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Indonesian

Sarong, ca. 1910

Cotton plain-weave batik (wax-resist print)

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.478

Batiks by Indo-Chinese makers are stylistically almost indistinguishable from those by Indo-European makers, as both groups primarily catered to the international community instead of the Indonesian market.

Most workshops specializing in indische batiks were located along the north coast of Java, concentrated in the port city of Pekalongan. In Pekalongan, Chinese and Indo-European batik workshops existed alongside Arab batik-trading operations. Most indische batiks flowed out of Java from Pekalongan, purchased by Dutch nationals or international tourists such as Lucy Truman Aldrich.

Liem Soen Tjaij (Tjay)

Indo-Chinese, probably b. China, late 19th-mid-20th century

Sarong, 1905 - 1915

Cotton; wax resist print (batik)

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.480

This sarong was made in an Indo-Chinese workshop for the Indo-Chinese or Indo-European market. The repeating cranes along the badan, or body of the sarong, are decidedly Chinese in origin, while the kepala bouquet is a direct response to European floral still-lives.

The signature on this example, Liem Soen Tjaij, is preceded by the Malay word *njonja* (for "Mrs."), here separated into *njo* and *nja* at the far upper right. Chinese batik artists with Europeanized names had received the status of *Gelijkgestelden* (or "equal") from the colonial Dutch government. This practice, introduced in 1910, gave chosen artisans improved trading benefits and additional rights.

Lien Metzelaar, textile designer

Indonesian

Sarong, ca. 1900

Cotton plain-weave batik (wax-resist print)

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.481

A young widow with four small children to support and only a small pension from the Dutch government, Lien Metzelaar began designing batiks in 1880. Her unique sarongs were soon sold in the cosmopolitan cities of Batavia and Jakarta, with many examples making their way to the Netherlands. Metzelaar transformed the design of the kepala, the primary motif band of the sarong, here a



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grouping of poppies on a blue ground. Metzelaar's style is so iconic that contemporary Dutch wax-printing firms such as Vlisco and Fentener van Vlissingen still find inspiration in it.

Indo-European; Javanese; Indo-Chinese

Sarong fragment, 1910

Cotton plain-weave batik (wax-resist print)

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.482

This batik was very likely produced by P. D. Tio, who created extremely fine examples in a Chinese workshop in the early 20th century. The diagonal bands along this sarong's background are Tio's hallmark and a traditional Javanese motif known as galaran. The lotus blossoms and abstracted fowl work with the wavy lines of the galaran to create a cool, aquatic effect. The layout of the motifs and the border are representative of the Nieuwe Kunst, or Dutch Art Nouveau style.



Javanese; Indo-European; Indonesian

Sarong (unfinished), ca. 1900

Cotton plain-weave batik (wax-resist print)

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.483

In this unfinished example, the complex layering of color—a signature of the craft of batik—is yet to be fully realized. Batik artists must possess the foresight to imagine the blending of many layers of pattern and color. Each length of fabric is the product of numerous skilled hands: the designer creates the pattern on tracing paper, then craftsmen prewash, size, stretch the fabric, and apply wax with stamps (a technique known as capping). After craftswomen draw wax-resist designs by hand (known as canting), the dyer submerges the textile in a succession of color baths.

