

*Subject to Change: Art and Design in the 20th Century*, December 6, 2011-June 25, 2012

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Yves Saint Laurent, French, 1936-2008, designer  
Rive Gauche, French, est. 1966, design label  
*Day dress*, 1981  
Silk; plain weave, crepe yarn, printed  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Miles Fiterman 1988.025.2

Just a few years after Yves Saint Laurent, aged twenty-one, was named head of the House of Dior in 1957, he brought street style into the hallowed halls of this grand couture house by referencing beatnik and foreign cultures in his designs. Soon after establishing his ready-to-wear Rive Gauche label, Saint Laurent started to explore his roots of growing up in Algeria by introducing African and Near Eastern themes into his collections. This fluid dress with peasant-style ruffle trim combines a youthful, casual aesthetic with the designer's delight in African, as well as Asian, pattern and color combinations. The coloration and grid design of the trim evokes kente cloth from Ghana, while the rich hues of the floral design suggest both batik prints from Java and the wax prints made in The Netherlands for the African market that they inspired.



Atelier Martine, French, 1911-1929, textile design firm  
Paul Poiret, French, 1879-1944, founder  
*Begonias*, ca. 1925  
Cotton; plain weave, screenprinted  
Edgar J. Lownes Fund 2002.92.2

The graphic, naive style of this furnishing length—with bold splashes of colorful begonias climbing on a hot pink grid and set off against a saturated black ground—takes its inspiration from floral textiles created by Vienna Secession artists based on Central European folk designs. The Parisian couturier Paul Poiret established the Atelier Martine in 1911 following a trip to Vienna in 1910 where he met with Josef Hoffmann, designer and a founder of the Vienna Secession (see Hoffmann's chair on this platform). Impressed by the multi-disciplinary work created by the artists of the Secessionist movement, Poiret established the school and atelier to produce textiles and decorative arts. To achieve an uninhibited decorative style, Poiret employed working-class girls with no formal artistic training to create

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the designs, which were then interpreted at the Atelier Martine for textile production. Martine products appeared in department stores throughout Europe and America and appealed to a wide variety of consumers.

Vera Maxwell, American, 1901-1995, designer  
Vera Maxwell Originals, American, 1947 - 1985, design label  
*Day dress*, ca. 1965  
Silk; plain weave, screenprinted  
Gift of Edith N. Rathbun 2003.122.2

Along with other American women designers who rose to prominence during World War II, Vera Maxwell is best known for designs that promoted simplicity and practicality while looking to world cultures for inspiration. In the 1930s Maxwell made her name with her "travel suit" of easily changed components; thereafter travel and the artwork of other countries, which she explored in museum collections, defined her work. The shift-style silhouette of this dress is emblematic of the 1960s, but in this case it also likely references the Chinese woman's qipao dress that was fashionable among Chinese elite society in the 1920s and that ultimately became functional dress for Chinese women in the workforce. Maxwell took advantage of the straightforward cut to highlight the large-scale printed fabric pattern; inspired by blue-and-white Chinese porcelain, its exotic floral and geometric imagery scrolls to form a cloud-like repeat pattern.



French  
*Furnishing textile length*, ca. 1913-1917  
Cotton; velvet, block-printed  
Edgar J. Lownes Fund and Museum Acquisition Fund 2004.2.2

Wisteria vines and fantastical flowers block-printed on this textile recall the motifs of Japanese printed textiles, albeit on a much enlarged scale. Although this furnishing fabric with its bright palette and bold pattern does not display the machine-age aesthetic seen in other objects nearby, it would have adorned the interior of a most adventurous modernist home. Non-Western textile influences as diverse as Japanese printed cloths, Javanese batiks, and African tie-dyed fabrics became increasingly influential forces and elements of design inspiration for artists during the first decades of the 20th century due in great part to the International Expositions. Artists such as Raoul Dufy, a painter and textile designer, promoted a style that looked to Eastern design while also endorsing a folk or so-called naive aesthetic.



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Bergdorf Goodman Custom Salon, American, 1923 - 1969, dressmaker  
Bergdorf Goodman, American, est. 1899, retailer

*Evening dress, 1937*

Silk, metallic yarn; compound weave, velvet, printed

Gift of the Goddard family 2005.89.5

The trained and characteristically elongated silhouette of this late-1930s evening dress cascades to the floor in a flourish of textures, celebrating the luxuriousness of its textiles as well as the lithe physique of the wearer. Layered over a rich green velvet that might otherwise have the starring role is a luminous silk and metallic yarn matelassé that vibrates with alternating bands of colorful flowers and intertwined vegetation. Though we do not know the name of the designer of this dress, its label tells us that it was made at the Bergdorf Goodman Custom Salon in 1937 for Mrs. Goddard of Providence. Bergdorf's Salon, on the top floor of its Fifth Avenue store, provided made-to-order garments of the highest quality as well as Parisian designs for an elite and discerning clientele for over four decades.



Denise Scott Brown, American, b. Zambia, b. 1931, designer

Robert Venturi, American, b. 1925, designer

The Fabric Workshop, textile development

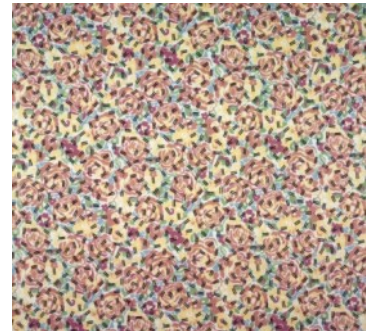
Knoll International, Inc., American, 1938-, manufacturer

*Grandmother, 1983*

Cotton; twill, rotary and hand screen printed

Gift of Joan H. and David E. Bright 2009.104

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, best known for their pivotal role in creating and promoting postmodern architecture, developed this textile at Philadelphia's Fabric Workshop. Titled *Grandmother*, this pattern is described by the designers as an "ordinary, sentimental, pretty floral" that was in fact hard to achieve. It springs from a wallpaper pattern that the couple put in their bedroom at home, as well as from a tablecloth that belonged to the grandmother of one of their architectural associates. In accordance with Venturi's famous retort that "Less is a bore," the designers added a strong overlay pattern of parallel black lines to create a contrast, perhaps even a clash, with the soft floral underneath. The resulting design has been used for furnishing fabric, apparel, and on laminated furniture.

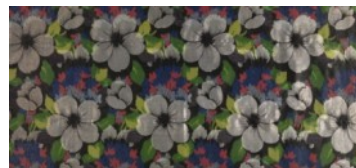


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Junya Watanabe, Japanese, b. 1961, designer  
Junya Watanabe Comme des Garçons, design label  
Comme des Garçons, Japanese, design house  
*Woman's dress*, spring/summer 2003  
Polyester, cotton, metal; plain weave, twill weave  
Gift of Mark Pollack 2011.56.1

Among the new wave of Japanese designers presenting collections in Paris starting in the early 1990s, Junya Watanabe is known for his mastery of shaping and manipulating carefully chosen, often technically advanced material. This dress, designed for his spring 2003 collection, is a sensitive and elegant expression of the designer's keen interest in sculpting novel creations out of building blocks replete with historical references. Described by a fashion reviewer as "a vision of 18th-century milkmaids who had parachuted into a field of flowers," the dress summons the image of the 1770s and 1780s fashion for polonaise gowns, a puffed style that referenced the contemporary working woman's habit of tucking her dress into her skirts to keep the hem clean. The white polyester textile printed with bouquets of blue roses also recalls blue-and-white porcelain, as well as the realistically drawn motifs seen in mass-produced mid-19th century European textiles.

Michel Dubost, French, 1879-1952, designer  
François Ducharne, French, 1920-present, manufacturer  
*Textile length*, 1920s  
Silk, metallic yarn; compound weave  
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 44.275.4



Shimmering metallic threads and a dynamic palette of black, pink, blue, and silver floral patterning adorn this French textile length. Produced by the high-end textile manufacturer F. Ducharne, whose atelier was based in the Montmartre district of Paris, this particular design was likely created by the firm's renowned designer Michel Dubost. During the early 1920s Dubost's work focused on complex woven patterns, such as this rhythmic floral, that evoke the designs found on Japanese obi bands and richly brocaded Chinese silks. This work also shares a kinship with the Paul Manship sculpture and the Frank Lloyd Wright desk on view nearby, both examples of Western designers looking to Eastern cultures for aesthetic inspiration. Manship looked to classical design and Indian miniatures and Wright admired Japanese craftsmanship, while also drawing upon a range of international influences.

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Albert Gowns, dressmaker  
*Evening cloak*, ca. 1914  
Silk; cut and voided velvet, applied cording  
Gift of Anne Kassel 64.051.1

This cloak's "cocoon" shape and sumptuous cut-and-voided velvet floral rosette design reference Near and Far Eastern source material and reflect the European and American taste for the exotic in the first decades of the 20th century. Fueled by the 1911 Paris season of impresario Sergei Diaghilev's dazzling, Eastern-inspired *Ballets Russes* (Russian Ballets), this vogue for orientalist designs spurred adventurous, artistic, and fashionable women to embrace loosely flowing garments and boldly patterned textiles reminiscent of those worn in the imagined East. The wearer of this enveloping cloak could make a nod to the far-away fantasy associated with ballet characters such as Scheherazade of the Persian tale *1001 Nights* while enjoying the coverage of a luxurious textile.



American  
*Day dress*, ca. 1926  
Silk; plain weave, screenprinted  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Sackett 66.017.2

The simple columnar shape that dominated women's dress through the 1920s, worn with cropped hair and a close-fitting cloche hat, not only signaled women's newfound mobility and the democratization of dress, but also provided a perfect "canvas" for decorative experimentation. In this airy day dress, the straightforward print of discrete flower heads in earth tones on a sheer ground is complicated by the large striped collar, low striped self-belt, and the neat pleating at the hem that turns the floral design into another pattern altogether. The daytime silhouette of this dress is more sensible in style than the bead-and-sequin encrusted flapper chemises that were designed to sparkle at night, but in daylight the dark, soft floral would have shimmered nonetheless.



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James Galanos, American, b. 1924, designer  
Galanos Originals, est. 1951, design house  
Bergdorf Goodman, American, est. 1899, retailer  
*Cocktail dress, 1959*  
Silk; satin weave, velvet, printed wrap  
Gift of Joseph K. Ott 83.175.12

The meticulous construction and opulent velour au sabre fabric (satin weave with velvet and warp print) of this cocktail dress account for the accolades given to its American designer, James Galanos. Its hazy warp-printed flowers seem to float over the beautifully structured silhouette, which effloresces into a historicizing, expertly pleated back bustle. In the post–World War II period, when Galanos established his design house in California, American designers continued to be internationally revered as innovative and expert craftsmen despite the re-emergence of Paris as the center of fashion. Amid a healthy rivalry between American and French designers, Galanos was one of a select few stateside ready-to-wear designers who earned a reputation for textile selections and fine workmanship on par with his French counterparts.



Liberty and Company, Ltd., British, manufacturer  
*Evening Dress, 1924*  
Discharge-printed silk crepe woven with gold metallic thread, with wrapped metallic tassels  
Museum Collection S84.106

The simple shape of this 1920s chemise-style evening dress is enriched by the combination of densely packed, brightly colored flowers with gold lamé accents on a dark, sheer ground. Characteristic of the Eastern-inspired style of the world-renowned design house and retailer Liberty & Co., printed floral patterns such as this one have enjoyed widespread popularity as the most fashionable textiles sold by that British emporium from the early 20th century to the present day.

