

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

September 17, 2010-December 6, 2010

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

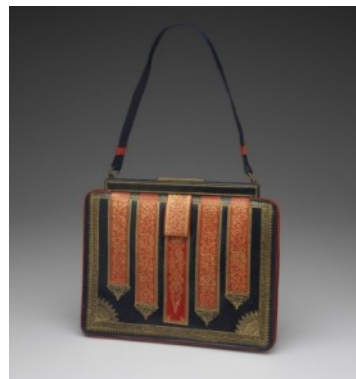
Jessie Franklin Turner, American, 1881-1956, designer
Jessie Fanklin Turner, American, ca.1922-1942, design label
Tea gown, 1930s
Silk, rayon; crepe weave, satin weave, embroidered
Gift of Mrs. Mary Jane Ryan 1986.218

This 1930s tea gown, like the adjacent early 1920s beaded dress, shows a color palette and delicately embroidered floral pattern that owes its inspiration to 17th-century Mughal Indian designs. It was made by Jessie Franklin Turner, who is considered to be America's first couturiere. Though the fabric was likely crafted in New York under Turner's direction, its inspiration derives from Indian clothing that Turner was known to have examined in the Brooklyn Museum and the American Museum of Natural History early in her career. Such motifs and the ethnic garments they recall correspond to the tea gown aesthetic that allowed women to strike a relaxed, casual pose when receiving visitors at home.



N. Raddi, Italian, Early 20th century, designer
Handbag, late 1930s/early 1940s
Leather, gold leaf; dyed, gilded, stamped
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.20

These gilded and stamped leather handbags were once offered for sale by the A. and L. Tirocchi sisters' dressmaker's shop, located in Providence on Broadway Street. Imported directly from Italy—one from a purveyor of fine leather goods known today as the fashion house Prada and the other from the more obscure N. Raddi based in Florence—the bags reflect both Providence's local dressmaking history and its cosmopolitanism in their exotic motifs and hand-crafted details.



The bags exemplify Italy's fine leatherwork craft tradition dating to the 16th century, while their decorative patterns are rooted in Italy's centuries-longer history of trade with the Near East. Intricate interlaced and scrolling arabesques on the Raddi bag and the

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cartouche and border format of the Prada bag, as well as the vegetal interlace on its reverse, reflect the strong and lasting influence of Islamic decorative arts evident even on Italian products dating to the mid-20th century.

Prada, Italian, 20th century, designer
Handbag, late 1930s-early 1940s
Leather, gold leaf; dyed, gilded, stamped, tooled
Gift of L.J. Cella, III 1991.169.59

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Yves Saint Laurent, French, 1936-2008, designer
Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche, French, 1966, design label
Coat, ca.1969
Synthetic fiber, plastic toggle buttons; pile weave, embroidered
Gift of Daphne Farago 1993.131

Just a few years after Yves Saint Laurent, aged twenty-one, was named head of the House of Dior in 1957, he decided to bring street style into the hallowed halls of this grand couture house by introducing it to beatnik culture. 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 plush hooded coat in a rich red-and-orange color palette references the hues the designer saw on his sojourns to his house in Morocco, and its construction expresses Saint Laurent's devotion to what he considered to be the freeing forms of North



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African dress: "To me nothing in fashion is more beautiful than the hooded burnoose."

Ruth Reeves, designer
Abstract Fleura, ca. 1949
Cotton, Lurex; hand screen-printed
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.70.4



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 evocative of chrysanthemums block printed on this cotton warp pile velvet, often called velveteen, recall the motifs of Japanese printed textiles, albeit on a much enlarged scale. The bright palette 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 fine and decorative artists during the first decades of the 20th century. Due in great part to the International Expositions, but also to gallerists such as Alfred Stieglitz in New York and Albert Flechtheim and Herwarth Walden in Berlin, a larger public, including textile designers, were exposed to new aesthetic standards often quite different from their own.

Jack Lenor Larsen, American, b. 1927, designer
Larsen Design Studio, American, 1958-present, design label
Samarkand, from the collection *Pleasure Dome of Kublai Khan*, 1968
Cotton; velvet, hand screen-printed
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2007.4.2



Samarkand, a textile design from the Larsen Design Studio's 1968 collection *Pleasure Dome of Kublai Khan*, was based on the vibrant fields of spring flowers found in the Asiatic steppes. The studio's principal designer, Jack Lenor Larsen, has been an avid traveler and student of world cultures throughout his life. Often drawing inspiration from global textile traditions, he investigates both the fabric structures and the iconic motifs of a given culture. For this

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textile he exploits his knowledge of textile structures to produce a saturated printed cotton velvet. Cotton velvets are notoriously hard to print due to the pile of the cloth interrupting the pattern of the applied dye. Once printed the lush hand of the velvet is often lost, yet Larson has achieved both a resplendent design and a soft hand through technical mastery. Owing to the design's immense commercial success and popularity it remained in constant production for twenty years—a testament to Larsen's skill and the ubiquitous popularity of "exotic" design.

French

Tunic, ca. 1925

Silk, metal thread; jacquard woven, engineered pattern

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2008.69.2



This tunic dates from the mid 1920s and was possibly produced as a show piece for an arts and industry exposition, such as the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, better known as the Art Deco exhibition. The fabric features a technological feat in jacquard weaving where the pattern is engineered within the loom width of the textile and the complete pattern appears as it is woven. The garment is an uncut length of fabric that wraps over the shoulders. There are no seams tailoring it to the body, therefore the loose, unconstructed shape resembles a Han Chinese or Dragon robe. The chinoiserie motif was popular in the 1920s in both fashion and interiors.

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 44.275.2



Shimmering metallic threads and dynamic pink-and-green floral patterning adorn this French length. Produced by the high-end textile manufacturer F. Ducharne, whose design 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 patterning 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 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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Vera Maxwell, American, 1901-1995, designer
Vera Maxwell Originals, American, 1947 - 1985, design label
two-piece dress, 1955
Silk, gold-wrapped yarn; plain weave, discontinuous supplementary
weft patterning
Gift of Vera Maxwell 59.100.1

In this two-piece dress made out of an East Indian sari, American designer Vera Maxwell alludes to the shimmering riches of a life swathed in silk and gold while summoning the ease and simplicity inherent in the draped and wrapped structure of Indian women's everyday wear. Though the bodice and skirt are cut and sewn in the Western manner, the knife pleats of the skirt and the wrap shirt—a style Maxwell claimed as her own innovation—bear the imprint of the iconic South Asian garment from which they are inspired. Along with other American women designers who rose to prominence during World War II, Maxwell is best known for her designs that promote practicality and comfort, especially as inspired by the clothing of other cultures seen in travels and in museum collections.



E. M. and E. B. Hillard, American, ca.1900, dressmaker
Tea gown, ca.1900
Silk, cotton, sequins; compound weave, chiffon, velvet, machine lace
Gift of Mrs. Walter Howard Levy 64.031.1

A confection of lace and patterned silk in a motif of pink and green chrysanthemums, this afternoon ensemble embodies the overt femininity and understated exoticism of women's dress popular during the Gilded Age. Beginning in the 1700s, luxury silks from China and Japan were popular with sea captains as light but valuable return cargo, and often as gifts for their wives at home. In keeping with that tradition, this silk evokes the conventional textiles of China in style, but represents the trend in textile design and manufacture at the start of the 20th century in America and Europe to evoke but not copy Eastern designs in their local production. Both the fabric and the dress were likely produced in America or France as the gown itself carries the label of a local Providence dressmaker.

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American

Evening dress, 1915-1920

Rayon, metallic thread; damask weave, lacing

Gift of the estate of Miss Ethel Merriman 68.108.50

The form of this dress unites two disparate time periods in one garment: it is a modern feminine take on the masculine ecclesiastical vestments of the Renaissance. The patterning of the dress's fabric is also inspired by the Renaissance dalmatic, a type of vestment that may have served as inspiration for the straight-tunic silhouette that became fashionable in the early 20th century. The designer was likely inspired by Fortuny (see the textile at left) and others, including Italian dressmaker Maria Montaci Gallenga and the French house of Madame Babani, both of which utilized exotic and historical textiles and silhouettes in their designs. The most remarkable feature of this otherwise historically inspired garment is the very material from which it is made: rayon. Available in the United States only after 1910, this fiber, initially known as "artificial silk," became one of the first laboratory-made fibers to reach the marketplace.



Liberty and Company, Ltd., British, manufacturer

Neglige, ca. 1914

Silk, metal thread; plain weave (tassel), crepe weave (lining), voided velvet, cut pile, hand printed, tassels

Gift of Robert Parsons 76.084.5



Vera Maxwell, American, 1901-1995, designer

Vera Maxwell Originals, American, 1947 - 1985, design label

Dress, 1973

Synthetic fiber, bast fiber, brass studs; plain weave, tie-dyed, supplemental weft patterning, crochet trim

Gift of Vera Maxwell 80.065.7

Embracing the youthful hippie "ethnic" aesthetic, yet remaining committed to high-end designer apparel, the woman wearing this Vera Maxwell creation might have seemed to straddle two worlds. Though the dress is assuredly of the moment in its use of a bold tie-dyed Indian shawl for the skirt coupled with a synthetic-fiber fabric in the bodice evoking red henna-dyed raw Indian silk, it also falls quite



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comfortably within the oeuvre of versatile garments designed by Maxwell throughout her career. In the 1930s Maxwell made her name with her "travel suit" of easily changed components, and thereafter allowed travel and other cultures explored in museum collections to define her work. An earlier Vera Maxwell dress is on view on the other platform in this gallery.

Bonnie Cashin, American, 1915-2000, designer
Philip Sills & Co., American, 1946 - 1977, manufacturer
Tunic dress, 1967
Leather; appliqué
Gift of Philip Sills 80.171.17A

The straightforward tunic shape of this brown suede dress is an example of Bonnie Cashin's efforts to adapt the flat patterns of Asian clothing, seen on her many travels to the East, to her ideas about the specific needs of modern women living in a global culture. Cashin often described herself as a nomad, and no doubt saw her clientele as preferring the same quality of life. In this collaboration with the leather company Sills & Co., a relationship that lasted for over twenty years, Cashin not only remained committed to her ideas of ease of movement, opportunities for layering, and simplicity of construction, but also quite pointedly to the embodiment of the traveler: the graphic blue trim at the dress's sides curves to form a double-horned motif, a centuries-old emblem of Central Asian nomadic culture.



Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo, Spanish, 1871-1949, designer
Fortuny, Italian, 1899 - 1946, design house
Fortuny Inc., American, 1927 - 1994, distributor
Fortuny Sp.A, Italian, ca.1994-present, distributor
Furnishing fabric, 1900-1925s
Cotton; twill weave, printed
Gift of Mrs. Barbara Deering Danielson 82.308.48A

This printed cotton textile length, intended for use in home furnishing, possesses the trademarks of the iconic Fortuny look: a printed surface inspired by a historic or exotic source and an antiqued surface appearance. Mirrored scrolling botanicals, heraldic eagles, and abstracted paisley forms reference Fortuny's own collection of antique 17th-century Venetian velvets and Islamic textiles. The lush decoration of this textile may also refer to tooled and stamped leatherwork, another well-known Italian craft popular since the Renaissance. This textile and the dress on display in front of it illustrate the vogue for Italian- and Islamic-inspired designs in the early 20th century. The continuing interest in this aesthetic may be



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seen in the two tooled-leather Italian handbags from the 1930s on view in the next gallery.

American

Dress, ca. 1920

Silk, beads; plain weave, embroidered

Museum Collection S82.208

Animated by a Mughal Indian arrangement of white birds cavorting amidst vines and foliage on a rich brown crepe de chine ground, this liberally beaded dress celebrates exotic imagery while also rejoicing in the idea of the emancipated modern woman in its loosened silhouette. 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 mobility and democratization, but also provided a perfect "canvas" for decorative experimentation. Though we know nothing of the maker of this dress or even who wore it, its dense beadwork suggestive of the riches of foreign court life leads us to imagine the free and creative personality who once entertained her admiring guests in this striking gown.

Lyonel Feininger, American, b. Germany, 1871-1956

Church at Gelmeroda XII, 1929

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 38.059

Over the course of twenty years, Feininger explored the motif of a church at Gelmeroda, a village near Weimar, Germany, which he had first visited in 1906. As he wrote to a friend about that region: "There are some church steeples in God-forsaken villages which belong among the most mystical achievements of so-called civilized man that I know." That sentiment is rendered in *Church at Gelmeroda, XII*, in which he visualizes the austere medieval structure as an elegant construction of parallel and diagonal lines emerging from an atmosphere of prismatic colors.

In 1919, Feininger had joined the faculty of Walter Gropius's Bauhaus, which sought to train a new guild of craftsmen who equally respected the values of applied and fine art. Now synonymous with the International Style in architecture, the Bauhaus aesthetic is based on the absence of ornamentation and by harmony between the function of an object and its design. *Church at Gelmeroda, XII* reflects this



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philosophy, as well as Feininger's original absorption of Cubist principles and his ongoing search for spiritual content in art.