

Subject to Change: Art and Design in the 20th Century April-Aug C&T Rotation
April 19, 2010-August 16, 2010

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Ghanaian

Textile length, 1960s-1970s

Cotton; plain weave, machine wax-resist printed

Gift of Robert Delson 1990.116.4

Though they are now internationally recognized symbols of west and east African fashion and identity, wax prints such as this textile length in fact have a rich multicultural history that stretches from Indonesian batiks and Indian cotton textiles to European and African-designed versions of the same. Some 20th-century wax-print designs are associated with local proverbs and are worn only on particular occasions. Based on its associated proverb, the words “Lai Momo,” translated as “burnt sticks” and printed on this textile, indicate that it would have been worn to convey reconciliation. This meaning seems to be especially significant in this particular context as it was given by a Ghanaian delegation to the donor, Robert Delson, who worked as an anti-colonial activist and lawyer for Ghanaian independence for many years.



Sonia Rykiel, French, 1930-2016, designer

Sonia Rykiel, established 1968, design label

Women's knit ensemble, spring/summer 1986

Wool, angora; machine knit

Gift of Frances DaSilva 1994.078.018

This vivid multi-colored striped knit ensemble, designed by Sonia Rykiel nearly twenty years after the start of her career, speaks to the consistency of this designer's work. Among the first generation of Parisian ready-to-wear designers, who benefited from the flourishing boutique culture of the 1960s, Rykiel started her knitwear line in response to the lack of well-designed, belly-enhancing maternity clothes of the period. Always purportedly designing for herself, Rykiel's triumph proved to be her general sensitivity to individual needs for self-expression, which allowed women wearing her clothes to feel both comfort and ownership of the style. Her clothes were meant for every women, every day, and she developed recognizable



RISD MUSEUM

modular components, exposed seams, and no linings to emphasize ease and versatility. Her pieces are straightforward and concise, sometimes quiet, and sometimes, as here, bursting with life.

Irene Lentz Gibbons, American, 1900 - 1962, designer
Irene, American, est. 1947, design label
John Baldwin, retailer
Woman's day suit, ca. 1959
Wool, silk; plain weave
Gift in honor of Rosemary McGurn O'Brien 1998.105.1

Having successfully opened her own custom dress boutique and acted as head designer for the luxurious Los Angeles department store Bullocks Wilshire, Irene Lentz Gibbons received her big break when she was commissioned to design Ginger Rogers's costumes for the 1933 film *Shall We Dance* with Fred Astaire. With several more films under her belt, Lentz Gibbons was hired as head designer at MGM in 1942 and, following on this achievement, started her own label, Irene, in 1947. The label ran the gamut from flowing evening gowns to expertly cut, smart day suits as seen here. This late-1950s example follows the short-skirted, boxy style of the day, but shows the imaginative details of pieced geometric fabrics, striking color choices, and clear-cut tailoring for which Irene was known and admired. Whether a day suit or evening dress, Irene's designs were always dramatic and never prim.



Yves Saint Laurent, French, 1936-2008, designer
Rive Gauche, French, est. 1966, design label
Woman's pantsuit, ca. 1974
Cotton, silk, leather; twill weave, plain weave
Gift of Rita Grossman 2000.63.8

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. Though Dior's devoted couture clientele were not impressed with this maneuver, it nonetheless set Saint Laurent along the path toward designing under his own name. This Rive Gauche striped denim pantsuit captures the gender ambiguity of Saint Laurent's famed "Le Smoking" formal pantsuit ensembles, but moves even closer to street-style prototypes in the combination of denim and casual menswear garment features. In his presentation of women's pantsuits for all occasions, Saint Laurent in

RISD MUSEUM

the 1960s and 1970s, much like Coco Chanel in the 1920s, borrowed from men's fashions for womenswear to comment on, and even propel, women's changing roles in the society of the time.

Olga De Amaral, Colombian, b. 1932
Trazos en Oro no. 1 (Sketches with Gold no. 1), 1987
Cotton, pigment, wood frame; plain weave, painted, couched
Gift of the estate of Jean Fain 2001.80.32

Olga de Amaral is perhaps best known for her shimmering golden large-scale weavings of the 1980s and 1990s, but intimate small-scale assemblages like this one show an equal attention to the formal concerns of material, color, and structure that defines all of her work. In this piece, she deconstructs the traditional painted canvas, cutting it into strips and unraveling the weft to leave loose warp ends that she couches to an underlying open-weave structure. De Amaral trained as an architect in her native Colombia, switching her focus to textiles while studying at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan in the late 1950s. Returning to Bogotá after graduation, she soon joined the ranks of a number of international textile artists in the 1960s who started presenting textiles as three-dimensional sculptural forms rather than utilitarian or painterly two-dimensional objects.



Lucienne Day, English, 1917-2010, designer
Trio, 1954 (design)
Cotton; plain weave, hand screenprinted
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2002.48.1

Lucienne Day's fabric designs of the 1950s feature witty, fanciful, and ebullient combinations of skeletal plant forms and abstract geometries. At the Royal College of Art, Day focused on textile design with the goal of promoting good design as affordable and for the people. Born of the optimism of postwar 1950s England, her commercial designs met with great success, making her one of the most sought-after designers of the era. With nods to the cartoons of Saul Steinberg, the paintings of Joan Miró and Paul Klee, and the sculpture of Alexander Calder, Day created playful and artfully balanced worlds within her textiles that captured the spirit of her time and the imagination of a broad public.



RISD MUSEUM

Pauline Trigère, American, 1908-2002, designer
Pauline Trigère, American, est. 1940, design label
Coat and dress ensemble, 1960s
Wool, silver ornament; twill weave, plain weave, printed
Gift of Shelley and Loren Ross 2008.78.2

Combining a strong sense of American practicality with seasoned couture skills, Pauline Trigère created garments that responded with great sensitivity to the female body. Even strong horizontal stripes, not often favored by women, were controlled and molded by Trigère to magically enhance the form, as in this coat and dress ensemble, in which the stripes direct the eye along a graceful, youthful silhouette. Both of Trigère's parents dressed the Russian aristocracy, and she grew up immersed in the world of European fine tailoring. When she arrived in the United States in 1937 and founded her design label with her brother in 1940, she was one of the few who still spent the considerable time it took to drape on live models and cut muslin prototypes herself. Lauded by master American designers such as Geoffrey Beene, Trigère's immaculate designs exude the confidence of both the designer and the women who would have worn them.



Japanese
Katagami (pattern paper), stencil, 1800s
Mulberry paper (kōzo), silk; persimmon stain, tsukibori (thrust cutting), hikibori (pull cutting)
Gift of Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe 21.435

This masterfully cut mulberry-paper stencil served as a guide for printing patterns onto textiles. In the late 19th century, thousands of Japanese stencils flowed into Europe and the United States via astute travelers and collectors, many of whom were artists. Imported as ideal examples of hand-craftsmanship and of motifs embodying economic and clean design, these stencils entered museums expressly for their pedagogic potential. Acquiring its first stencils in 1901, RISD was among the first art schools to actively promote Japanese stencils as a design resource, following closely on the heels of the Museum for Applied Arts in Vienna, which made its collection of some 8,000 stencils available to influential artists of the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshops). While this stencil predates the textiles on view nearby, its broken striped pattern is but one example of the overwhelming influence of Japanese design on avant-garde Western designers of the early 20th century.

RISD MUSEUM

G. E. Campbell, est. late 19th century, dressmaker
Day dress, ca. 1905
Cotton, silk; plain weave, supplementary warp patterning
Gift of the estate of Charles Morris Smith III 54.213.3

By the mid-19th century striped clothing had made its way from sailors' garb to the fashionable loungewear of beachgoers lazing under nautical-themed parasols. This seashore-ready summer dress, custom-made by the Providence dressmaker G. E. Campbell, features bold vertical stripes on a white cotton foundation. Dispensing with the sweet-pea colors, lace trim, beads, and other froufrou that would adorn a contemporaneous Edwardian-era evening dress, this more casual afternoon dress shows a stark simplicity that relies on the linear stripes to delineate the "S-curve" silhouette of the day. Pulling inward at the bodice to the minute corseted waist, the stripes, punctuated by horizontal ribbon trim, curve outward over the padded hips on the skirt and spill down to the hem, echoing the sinuous lines of the Art Nouveau designs seen in the Hector Guimard stained-glass window also displayed on this platform.



Jessie Franklin Turner, American, 1881-1956, designer
Lounging Pajamas, 1934-1935
Silk satin weave
Anonymous gift 56.013

Beginning her career as a lingerie designer, New York couturier Jessie Franklin Turner built her reputation on creating loose, flowing tea gowns and lounging pajamas in the 1920s and 1930s. Allowing women to strike a relaxed, casual pose when receiving visitors at home, these garments were the perfect expression of the ease and versatility in clothing that grew out of a post-World War I drive for women's emancipation. The lounging pajamas, a major fad of the period, prove that even fluid silk can appear practical and comfortable, in addition to being elegant and sensual. A talented colorist, Turner devised her own dye palette, creating a dynamic striped effect here through the piecing on the jacket, the one-piece pajama body, and the striking sash design.



RISD MUSEUM

Mme. Eta, American, 20th century, designer

Evening dress, 1945

Silk, metal zipper; plain weave (taffeta)

Gift of Design Laboratory, the Brooklyn Museum 61.095.20

Eta Valer Hentz, professionally known as Mme Eta, was among the leading high-end ready-to-wear designers working in New York from the 1920s through the 1940s. Though she is best known now for her fluid Grecian-themed collection of softly pleated classically inspired rayon garments, Mme Eta was perhaps better recognized in her own time for her dramatic structured garments such as this evening dress. Made right on the heels of the World War II armistice, this dress eschews the trend toward economy of fabric imposed on the public during the war, in particular restrictions on silk. At the same time, the striped silk, reminiscent of men's tie fabric, recalls American war-time innovations such as using cotton mattress ticking for daytime womenswear. An example of a menswear-type fabric expertly tailored into a luxurious gown, this dress embraces sewing technique as much as it does a romantic past in its bustle-like bow and sweeping drapery.



Japanese

Textile length, early 1900s

Cotton; plain weave, printed

Gift of Winthrop W. Aldrich 64.081

As is evident in the Japanese stencil displayed in this gallery on the far left wall, Japanese design imported to Europe and America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries exemplified restraint and the inherent beauty of hand-craftsmanship. This Japanese printed cotton textile length, made expressly for the Western market, shows a patchwork of floral and vegetal motifs set within the bounds of striped bands, a combination of elements that fuses traditional Japanese motifs with Japanese preconceptions of Western taste. Natural forms and abstraction merge in this textile—as in the table and stained glass window displayed here by Frank Lloyd Wright, a collector of Japanese art and design—marrying disparate forms that nonetheless exude quiet refinement in their subtle coloration and flow of motifs.



RISD MUSEUM

American

Day dress, ca. 1910

Silk, mother-of-pearl buttons; plain weave

Museum Collection S84.089

The regular gray-and-white striped patterning on this circa 1910 dress is complemented by delicate details such as mother-of-pearl buttons, small tucks on the narrow sleeves, and bodice and sash decorations of asymmetric bows and fabric-covered balls. By 1909 the exaggerated curves of the earlier fashionable silhouette had lengthened and straightened to favor an almost vertical carriage from head to toe, a fashion called Empire or Directoire, in reference to the high-waisted styles of a century prior. This relative simplicity and directness also echoed Arts and Crafts aesthetics, characterized by restraint and economy of line rather than an ostentatious accumulation of form and ornamentation. As the adjacent 19th-century Japanese stencil confirms, the striped motif served the new emphasis on clarity and refinement to suggest sophistication and overall “good design.”



Vito Acconci, American, 1940 - 2017, video artist

Castelli Sonnabend Tapes and Films, distributor

The Red Tapes, 1976

Video, black-and-white, sound

Jesse Metcalf Fund 81.090abc

Vito Acconci's *The Red Tapes* propelled video art into new territory. The epic work, which consists of three parts —“Tape 1: Common Knowledge,” “Tape 2: Local Color,” and “Tape 3: Time Lag”— explores biography, human relationships, and cultural history through a fragmented narrative of vignettes and collage. A section at the end of “Tape 1,” in which Acconci offers his summation of important moments or “booms” in American history (industrialization, population growth, Western expansion, civil rights movements, increase in crime, and subsequent expansion of police powers), inspired Siebren Versteeg's *Boom* (Fresher Acconci), 2007, currently on view in the adjacent Spalter New Media Gallery

