

# Data tèxtil



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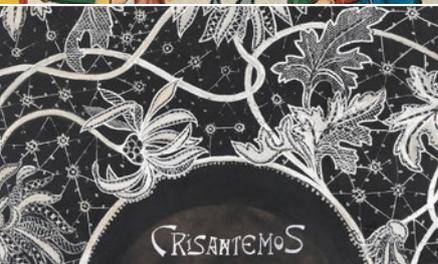
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# Renaissance Embroidery in Burgos

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Photographs: AURELIO A. BARRÓN GARCÍA

<sup>1</sup> The first reports – referring to Alonso de Camiña, Andrés de Ochandiano and Simón de Axpe – are due to CEÁN BERMÚDEZ, Juan Agustín, *Diccionario Histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las Bellas Artes en España*, Madrid, 1800. A number of chasubles and capes were described in 1921: CORTÉS, Juan Antonio, HERGUETA, Domingo, HUIDOBRO, Luciano and MARTÍNEZ BURGOS, Matías, *Catálogo general de la Exposición de arte retrospectivo. VII Centenario de la Catedral de Burgos. 1921*, Burgos. Martínez Sanz presented a full list of fifteenth and sixteenth century embroiderers: MARTÍNEZ SANZ, Manuel, *Historia del Templo Catedral de Burgos*, Burgos, 1866, pp. 225-228. Luciano Huidobro published several more articles on Alonso de Camiña: HUIDOBRO, Luciano, “Artistas burgaleses desconocidos. Alonso de Camiña y otros”, in *Boletín de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos Históricos y Artísticos de Burgos*, nº 15, 1926, pp. 37-40 and nº 16, 1926, pp. 66-77. GARCIA RAMILA, Ismael, “Breves pero curiosas noticias sobre

Although they are little known, numerous examples of embroidery applied on liturgical vestments are to be found in the bishopric of Burgos, which became an archbishopric in 1574. Many of these pieces have a high artistic value, but few of them have been studied in depth<sup>1</sup>. In this article we present the preliminary results of a study that is still under way: making the most of the opportunities that the Internet provides, we are pleased to bring some of the most important creations of the embroiderers of the city of Burgos to a wider public.

The embroiderers worked with rich, expensive cloths and silk threads and gold, whose prohibitive price meant that often the materials had to be paid for in advance by the customers when they commissioned the work. Nevertheless, the instruments required were very simple and of little value – needles, frames, thimbles and scissors – and so they appear only very rarely in the records that have come down to us. In the inventory of the possessions of Nicolás Morquecho, his “eleven frames for the trade with their pinewood

el arte textil en los siglos que fueron”, *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González*, t, XXI, 1962, pp. 5-14. For a brief account of the history of embroidery, see IBÁÑEZ PÉREZ, Alberto C., “Artes menores del siglo xvi”, in *Historia de Burgos. III. Edad Moderna (3)*, Burgos, 1999, pp. 186-192. BARRÓN GARCÍA, Aurelio A., “Las artes decorativas en Burgos durante el Renacimiento”, RODRÍGUEZ PAJARES, Emilio Jesús (ed.), *El arte del Renacimiento en el territorio burgalés*, Burgos,

2008, pp. 297-306. BARRÓN GARCÍA, Aurelio A., “Telas y bordados en Burgos durante el Renacimiento”, in *Biblioteca 26. El siglo xvi en la Ribera del Duero Oriental. Arte, Historia y Patrimonio*, 2011, pp. 73-94. Information on the embroiderers Simón de Axpe, Diego de Medina Barruelo and Martín Sanz de Carabantes, who worked in Cellerigo and Treviana, towns in La Rioja but dependent on the old archbishopric of Burgos, can be found in MOYA VALGAÑÓN, José Gabriel, “Documentos

para la historia de los artes industriales en la Rioja”, *Berceo*, nº 89, 1974, pp. 69, 71, 72, 78 and 79. SIGÜENZA PELARDA, Cristina, “Los ornamentos sagrados en la Rioja. El arte del bordado durante la Edad Moderna”, *Berceo*, nº 150, 2006, p. 226. The most thorough-going study is M<sup>a</sup> Pilar Ruiz de la Cuesta’s *Los ornamentos litúrgicos en el obispado de Burgos: los bordadores de Burgos del siglo xvi*, though her work remains unpublished.

2 FLORIANO CUMBREÑO, A., *El bordado*, Barcelona, 1942, pp. 18-23. GONZÁLEZ MENA, M.A., *Catálogo de bordado*, Madrid, 1974, p. 49.

stands” were valued at only a ducat and a half. The craftsmen also had weights of threads and cloths, a “reel for spinning silk”, bobbins for embroidering in *oro matizado* (a Renaissance technique involving profuse embroidering with small stitches of coloured silk on a metal ground) for winding gold threads and “a board of the trade of embroiderer” on which to display the work. In the embroidery of the liturgical vestments of this period silk threads were always used, and the threads of Granada were highly valued. Silver threads and gold threads were also used, although the latter were in fact silver-gilt. The gold thread of Milan was particularly sought after, and was divided into “long weight” – which fetched 16 *reales* per ounce in 1589 – and “short weight”, like the thread acquired by Francisco de Berrio and Tomás Macías to make a cover for a processional float in 1585. The gold thread of Seville is also mentioned in the documents, and was worth 12 *reales* per ounce in 1600. To set off the decorative elements, and for the fringes and tassels, gold thread was used – corded or in purl, rolled in spiral. The more modest parishes commissioned pieces made with false gold thread – that is, plated in copper; in 1600 the church of Villarmero bought a selvedge embroidered in false gold from Simón de Axpe. The silk threads used were in a variety of colours and shades, and were of excellent quality. The fine silk known as *seda joyante* was particularly appreciated for its shine and its resistance, which make the embroidery easier and left the surface velvety and iridescent. There are several references to this high quality silk: in 1602 the church of Villasilos acquired *joyante* silk to make dalmatics, and in 1617 Simón de Axpe received *seda joiante* for a frontal commissioned by the parish of Lodoso.

Embroidery is the art of applying adornment to the surface of piece of woven cloth, using needle and thread. The embroidery made on liturgical ornaments has been termed “erudite embroidery” by some authors, to distinguish it from popular embroidery<sup>2</sup>. “Erudite” embroidery involves the use of rich, sumptuous fabrics as the basis of an ornamentation made with silk, gold or silver threads by the application of a variety of techniques. It can achieve the same effects of volume, colour shading and depth as painting. It is also an art that incorporates the features of its age, and evolves in line with other arts. During the Renaissance, since the figures represented are embroidered with silk and the images also appear to be dressed in silk, the shades conform to the norms of the technique known as *paños cambiantes* (silks in cangianti combinations); that is, they imitate the reflections of the silk cloth woven with two colours. This technique of had begun to be used in painting in Rome, above all after 1500, and it soon spread to embroiderers who with silks of two or more colours reproduced combinations of green-yellow, red-green,



*Paños cambiantes*: chasubles from Cabia and Cañizar de Argaño.

3 Olga Cantos has studied the pictorial technique of *paños cambiantes* or *cangianti* in her PhD thesis, CANTOS MARTÍNEZ, Olga, *Recursos plásticos en la escultura policromada aragonesa de la Contrarreforma (1550-1660)*, Tarazona, 2012, pp. 379-454.

4 TURMO, Isabel, *El bordado y bordadores sevillanos (siglos XVI a XVIII)*, Seville, 1955. PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, Manuel, *El arte del bordado y del tejido en Murcia: siglos XVI y XIX*, Murcia, 1999. AGREDA PINO, Ana María, *Los ornamentos en las iglesias zaragozanas: siglos XVI-XVIII*, Zaragoza, 2001.

red blue/purple, blue-red, blue-white and green-red, the first colour being the background and second the relief<sup>3</sup>. In the chasubles of Barbadillo del Mercado, Bascuñana, Cabia, Cadiñanos, Cañizar de Argaño, Cebolleros, Santibáñez de Esgueva, Villahizán de Treviño and Villambistia we find this effect in green-yellow, blue-white, blue-yellow and red-yellow combinations.

The most widely used form of embroidery was known as *sobrepuesto* (appliqué or applied work), in which the pieces are embroidered for example on a canvas and then cut out and sewn onto the ground fabric. Other techniques were embroidery *de aplicación*, in which ornamental motifs were cut out from cloth and then added, and *al pasado*<sup>4</sup>, the only technique in which the decorative motif was obtained by piercing the ground fabric with multiple stitches. This type of embroidery was ideal for small pieces and details, but was more difficult to manage in larger surfaces. We find an example of it in the selvedge of the chasuble of Arauzo de Torre. It was more difficult to use embroidery *al pasado* for fabrics which have a pile, like velvet, although there are cases of full vestments with velvet richly embroidered *al pasado* with distinctive decorative motifs in Mahamud, Los Balbases and Cañizar de Argaño. Other velvets were woven mixed with large motifs made with gold thread in towns in Italy and the north of Europe; examples are a violet and gold velvet vestment in the church of Saint Giles in Burgos. To apply figures it was easier to embroider a small piece, cut it out and apply it on the ground chosen. For practical reasons as well, if the embroidery was *sobrepuesto*, several workers could create the motifs for a liturgical ornament in the workshop at the same time, as was the case of the ornaments left by the Cardinal Iñigo López de Mendoza. In contrast, using embroidery *al pasado*, only one person could



Embroidery *al pasado*, *sobrepuesto* and *de aplicación*: chasubles from Arauzo de Torre and Villafruela; cape from Villanueva-Soportilla.

work on the piece. To provide volume for pieces embroidered *sobrepuesto*, other materials, card or paper might be added underneath. The worn area of the cloth used to cover the cross of the church of Lodoso allows us to see the paper inserted beneath the ground fabric of the embroidery.

In the embroidery *de aplicación* the thread plays a secondary role, since the decorative motifs are not embroidered. It is a simple, rapid system and also quite cheap, because cloth from other pieces can be reused. In this technique the ornamentation to be used was cut from fine materials which were then sewn onto the ornament. Previously the motifs had been drawn on a piece of paper placed on the cloth, or directly on the ground fabric. To prevent the appliqué cloths from becoming creased they were reinforced with paper, card or parchment. The outline of the motifs in gold piping helps to achieve the final effect which, since it is rather flat, can be complemented with chain stitches, backstitches or shading of particular details.

The third kind of embroidery, *sobrepuesto*, was the most popular method for applying figures in liturgical ornaments. In this technique the work was not performed directly on the ground fabric, but was embroidered separately, on frame on top of a fine canvas. Once embroidered it is cut out and applied to the ornament, joined to it by small yellow silk stitches. The embroidered motifs were also made with gold threads. This was the preferred form of embroidery during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, above all for the embroidery of religious images. As with the passing of the years many ornaments have become worn, it is now possible to see the technical processes that the embroiderers used.

Embroidery of all kinds can be made with various stitches of silk and gold. Among the silk stitches the most important was known as *punto de matiz* (a satin stitch of needlepoint). To create it the embroiderer made small stitches with silk threads of one or more shades of colour. It is also known as *acu pictae*

5 EISMAN, Carmen, *El arte del bordado en Granada: siglos XVI al XVIII*, Granada, 1989, p. 41.

or needle painting, because of the suggestive visual effect it can achieve<sup>5</sup>: a skilled embroiderer can obtain the same volume, light, shade and depth with these small stitches as a painter mixing colours on the brush. The records from Burgos refer to this stitch as *seada de matices*: in 1601, when Juan de Lucas entered the workshop of Diego Diez de Medina he undertook to embroider “some figures with *sedas de matices*”; when in 1596 Francisco de Berrio signed a contract to make a cloth to cover the cross for the church of Zarratón de Juarros he was required to ensure that all the figures should be “embroidered on white satin with gold from Seville and Milan with their *sedas de matices*”.

If the *punto de matiz* was used to embroider a face or hands, it was known as *encarnación*. The contract signed by Simón de Axpe to make a cape for the monastery of Our Lady of Vadillo in 1595 specifies “the *encarnación* of hands and faces”; another contract from 1585 required “the face in *encarnación*”. In this stitch the whole of the face is covered, although sometimes the traces painted on the ground fabric can be seen, resembling shadows – this same reserve of the ground fabric, either untreated or lightly painted, can be extended to other surfaces of embroidery such as areas of light or depicting the sky; this can be seen in the figures embroidered on the chasubles of Prádanos de Bureba, Santa Gadea del Cid, Santibáñez de Esgueva, Villanueva de Argaño and Yudego.

The documents from Burgos also contain references to the stitch known as *punto peleteado*, which was used to embroider hair and beards, and also to cover an image or a surface with stitches of a single colour, as Isabel Turmo rightly notes. This stitch was used to cover a crown or a complete figure “and to carry the Assumption of Our Lady with her angels and her crown *peleteada* on white satin”; in another case the embroidery is intended to accompany “a figure of St. James the Greater on horseback, all embroidered on white satin and *peleteada*”. In *punto peleteado* stitches of the same colour are made in different directions in order to create a sensation of volume. Small pearls may be added sewn along the halos of the figures or marking the edges of crosses and other elements, as we find in a chasuble from Mahamud.

The silk stitches mentioned were used in embroidery *al pasado* and the *sobrepuesto*. In the sixteenth century they were used in all possible varieties and reached such a level of perfection that the work of embroiderers was compared with that of other colour artists such as painters and polychrome artists.

As well as the stitches used to fill the background, other stitches were used to mark certain details. Among them is the backstitch, used to outline hands, noses, mouths and eyes and to mark the folds in garments.

Although stitches with metal threads are called gold stitches, in fact gold was not used as thread, but round silk twist, comprising a core of silk covered

Shot silk: a cape from Covarrubias; chasubles from Yudego and Santibáñez de Esgueva.



by a plate of rolled gold or gold-plated silver. One of the most interesting gold stitches was known as *oro llano*, *oro tendido* or *oro atravesado* (or *nué* or shaded gold); it is the oldest, and the model for all the others. Its technique consists in drawing a series of threads over the surface to be covered and holding them in place with orange-coloured stitches so that they would pass unnoticed. Together, the gold threads and the silk stitches can obtain a variety of geometrical patterns. Among the instruments that Nicolás Morquecho used in his workshop were eight bobbins. The bobbin was needed to stretch the gold thread in the satin stitch; with the left hand, the embroiderer unrolled it and with the right hand would add the stitches that attached it to the fabric. Along with the *punto de matiz* (encroaching stitch) and *oro matizado* – which derived from *oro llano*, a technique which used silver and gold threads – these were the most frequently used stitches in the sixteenth century. They were used for the background of the chapels, medallions, columns, attributes of saints and halos, although in the latter case the threads were placed forming half circles.

A variant of *oro llano* was used to make the bands that framed the selvages and the decorated areas. In 1592 Lucas and Diego de Medina Barruelo bought “a frontal of a white damask with gold cloth and bands” and in 1605 Nicolás de Aguilar agreed to embroider a sleeve with upper and lower friezes of Milan gold.

Two very similar variants of the gold stitch were the stitches known as *setillo* and *empedrado* (goldwork in basket-stitch). In *setillo*, widely used in the sixteenth century, cotton threads were placed in parallel and crossed over by gold threads. They were both held in place by orange silk stitches in the spaces left by the cotton. *Empedrado* was practically identical, except that the silk stitches are grouped in twos or threes obtaining an effect resembling **tiling in bas relief and in chiaroscuro**. *Setillo* and *empedrado* were used in patterns of grotesques and *candelieri*, and in the bases of columns and arches, as seen in the contract for the cloth cross cover that Nicolás de Aguilar made for Fresnillo de las Dueñas: “a frieze... with its pillars and arches all in *setillo*” or in the frontal that Simón de Axpe made for Poza de la Sal, including “a cross of *oro matizado* and *setillo*”.

The most important of the silk and gold stitches was *oro matizado* (goldwork using underside couching of metal threads), a technique applied profusely in the sixteenth century and used in the most luxurious and elaborate figurative settings. The technique is similar to that of *oro llano*, but the round twists placed in parallel are covered entirely by coloured silks. As the gold can hardly be seen through the silks, an effect of transparency and luminosity is obtained which gives it a special shine on the silky surface that bears the pattern. The final result is similar to the effect of tapestries, but its shine is similar to that



*Oro matizado*: chasubles from Burgos: the Charterhouse of Miraflores and the church of Saint Giles.

of enamel. There are many references to this stitch in the documentation: in 1573 Nicolás Morquecho and Alonso Camiña made a cloth cross cover for the parish of St Mary in Villahizán de Treviño with “four standing images with *oro matiçado*”; the embroiderer Sebastián Cornejo undertook to pay Bernardino de Mirones, an embroiderer from Villadiego, for “six settings of *oro matiçado*”; in 1568, in the parish de Pedrosa de Río Urbel, Jerónimo de Palenzuela agreed to make a vestment in which “the selvedges of the saints (were to be) of *oro matizado*”. In this stitch, as in the case of *oro llano*, the bobbin is used to stretch the thread, although in this case the gold thread is covered completely with the silk stitches.

This stitch, so rich and difficult to perform, appears in the contract in 1596 for a cloth cross cover in Villanueva de Río Ubierna which, to judge from its price – 375 000 maravedís – must have been spectacular. This contract mentions all the kinds of stitches: the figures were to be made in *oro matizado* – “the six ovals [for the figures] embroidered in *oro matiçado atravesado*”; and they were to “bear six pillars of *oro matiçado* and *setillo* and *oro lucio*”. The craftsmen contracted were Diego de Medina Barruelo, Diego Díaz de Medina, Simón de Axpe and Martín Sanz de Carabantes.

In the last decades of the sixteenth century *oro matizado* became very expensive and was progressively replaced by *punto rajel*, which in Burgos was known as *punraxe* (a laid and couched work). In this technique a series of round twists are stretched over a canvas at a distance from one another and woven with coloured silks. *Punraxe* was effective and was cheaper than *oro matizado* because it required few gold twists from Milan or Seville and allowed the application of longer silk stitches which covered the surface faster.



*Punraje*: chasubles from Las Hormazas (Borcós), Santibáñez de Esgueva and Lodoso.

When Domingo de Amurrio entered Francisco Frías’s workshop to learn the trade in 1599, the contract stipulated that he would make “four figures of *oro matizado*... and the same number in *punraje*”. In 1595, the prior of the monastery of Nuestra Señora de Vadillo de Frías commissioned a cape from Simón de Axpe and a chasuble and two dalmatics from Francisco de Berrio; the contracts made with the two embroiderers expressed that the figures to be made “must all be made of *punraje* on gold”. The figures on the dalmatics and the lectern cloths in Salas de los Infantes were made in the same way. If it is applied carefully – as in the images of Saints Cosmas and Damian of Hontoria del Pinar, in the vestment of Villahoz and the chasuble of Las Hormazas-Borcós – it achieves an effect similar to that of *oro matizado*, without its shine but with an appearance closer to that of painting.

The embroiderers of Burgos, especially in the second half of the century, formed a large artistic group. Ordinances were issued for the guild of embroiderers and chasuble-makers in 1544, possibly following on from earlier trade groups. The documentation, above all in the first half of the century, sometimes refers to the craftsmen as embroiderers and sometimes chasuble-makers. They specialized in liturgical vestments – capes, chasubles, dalmatics, cross covers, pennants of the religious fraternities – but only the garments reserved for solemn festivities such as burials or special celebrations bore embroidery. Although the most qualified artists mastered both garment making and embroidery, there would probably have been craftsmen in the workshop who specialized in one or other of these areas and it is highly likely that not all the chasuble-makers were able to embroider. In some letters of apprenticeship the references to the two crafts are very different – “the art of embroidery and trade of chasuble-maker” – and some specify that the master

<sup>6</sup> In 1610 in the city of Los Reyes del Perú, the embroiderer Jerónimo Ruiz from Becerril died: among his possessions he left: “four figures of the four evangelists on a white background, for embroidering. Four other figures of the four doctors of the church on a white background, for embroidering”. LÓPEZ GUTIÉRREZ, Antonio J., “Los expedientes de bienes de difuntos del Archivo General de Indias y su aportación a la Historia del Arte”, ARANDA, Ana M<sup>a</sup>, GUTIÉRREZ, Ramón, MORENO, Arsenio and QUILES, Fernando (dir.), *Barroco Iberoamericano. Territorio, Arte, Espacio y Sociedad*, Sevilla, 2001, T. I, p. 138.

had to teach the apprentice to make figures with the most advanced techniques such as *oro matizado*, *punto rajel*, *peleteado* and *encarnación*. In addition, the embroiderer had to be able to draw patterns accurately because the embroidery of figures began with the creation of a detailed pattern on the cloth<sup>6</sup>. On occasions, both in Burgos and elsewhere, painters were entrusted with this task; in 1512, the painter Bernardino de Valmaseda received 365 maravedís “for a pattern for his lord [the Constable of Castile Bernardino Fernández de Velasco]”. In 1543, Francisco de Benavente, an embroiderer from Medina de Rioseco, was embroidering the figures of the orle and hood of the pontifical cape left to the cathedral of Burgos by the bishop Íñigo López de Mendoza and, given the exceptional quality of the drawing and the embroidery, sent two versions to Burgos for the canons to decide whether they should be placed on the cape or on the chasuble. He sent one of the stories drawn and the other half embroidered, so that the canons could appreciate the quality.

Indeed, drawing played an important part in the training of the embroiderers of Burgos. In 1578, when Andrés de Ochandiano’s skill as an embroiderer was assessed, his examiners – Jerónimo de Palenzuela and Nicolás Morquecho – declared they had both had him in their workshops carrying out “work of embroidery and drawings of all kinds”. Frequently a period spent at a workshop developing one’s skills in embroidery and drawing could serve as proof of ability, although sometimes candidates were required to demonstrate their knowhow by carrying out a commission: the examiners of Miguel Sedano instructed him to embroider a figure of Saint Roch in *punto rajel*, and Juan Ortiz de Zárate an image of Our Lady of the Conception. Returning to the patterns drawn for embroidery, the wearing away of the magnificent cape in the church of Cabia shows that the base pattern was an impressive artistic achievement, with attention to the smallest detail, as if it had been made to be exhibited. Around 1600 and in the following decades works adorned with figures were commissioned, but applying a rather simpler approach; instead of embroidering entirely with *punto de matiz*, some of the contours were profiled and the figures completed with brush painting: the church in Lodoso preserves a chasuble in which the fields of the figures, delimited with stitches, are almost entirely painted. The same technique is observed in some embroidery *de aplicación* with merely decorative motifs such as the frontal of Hontoria del Pinar.

Normally the embroiderers were men who were employed by the workshop. Women could not be hired, except during the year of dispensation awarded to the widows of master embroiderers. Since the embroiderer’s trade was transmitted very strictly from fathers to sons inside the family environment, and given the nature of the work, the wives of the embroiderers were often familiar

Base pattern: Cape from Cabilia. Retouches in paint: chasuble from Lodoso.



with the craft and helped in the workshop. In 1596, on signing an agreement with another embroiderer, Diego de Medina Barruelo stated that he had two daughters who were able to embroider. In 1592 the same embroiderer acquired from the convent of Las Huelgas a frontal of white damask with an image of the Virgin Mary in the centre which may have been embroidered in the convent itself. In 1623 Catalina de Polanco, a nun at the convent of Saint Dorothy of Burgos, received 95 200 maravedís from the church of Quintanapalla for two crimson velvet dalmatics embroidered in gold and silk and bearing figures.

The highly detailed and precise work of embroidery gained these craftsmen a reputation comparable to that of any other artist of their times. In some cases, their creations fetched prices comparable to those paid for the work of silversmiths and even of painters and wood engravers. As occurred in the other arts and due to the growing virtuosity of the work, the prices rose steeply at the end of the sixteenth century. Jerónimo de Palenzuela received 218 995 maravedís in 1574 for an embroidered cape, chasuble and dalmatic for the church of the Barrios de Colina. In 1583 Francisco de Berrio completed a cape and two chasubles which had been started by Alonso de Camiña and were valued at 161 250 maravedís. Simón de Axpe charged Fresno de Rodilla 91 612 maravedís for a cloth cross cover, of which the labour costs accounted for 57 000 and the materials for the rest. The same embroiderer received 162 000 maravedís for another cloth cross cover made for Sotragero in 1595. The cross cover of Lodoso, which was commissioned to Axpe in 1607 and which is still preserved today, was valued at 134 000 maravedís. Simón de Axpe received 563 822 maravedís in 1608 for a set of liturgical vestments embroidered entirely in crimson velvet: it included a cape, a chasuble, two dalmatics and two lectern covers.

At the start of the sixteenth century a large part of the chasubles and other liturgical vestments were made with fabrics which were then covered with richer materials bearing selvedges, fringes, hoods of the capes or the lower part and the cuffs of the dalmatics. In Villahoz, Villafruela, Villadiego, Vizcaínos de la Sierra, Vizcaínos de la Sierra (from the Abbey of Saint Peter of Arlanza), Covarrubias, Manciles, Quintanadueñas, Sasamón, Fresno de Rodilla and many other sites, capes, chasubles and dalmatics are preserved bearing appliqué embroidery on a velvet base, and on other occasions velvet was sewn over damask or vice versa. The appliqués – especially in the chasubles and capes of the capes – tended to represent figures and were frequently embroidered with *punto de matiz*. Gold was hardly used in the appliqués; as in Gothic painting, tended to be reserved for the background, which in embroidery was made of *oro llano*. The Cathedral of Burgos, the church of Saint Giles in Burgos, the Charterhouse of Miraflores, Covarrubias, Castil de Peones, Moncalvillo, Padilla



Burgos (Cathedral "The cape of Basilea"), Castil de Peones, Villafruela, Burgos (Saint Lesmes).



de Abajo, Roa, Salas de los Infantes, Santa Gadea del Cid, Santa María del Campo, Sasamón, Sedano, Tosantos, Villafruela, Villafría, and Villalvilla de Gumiel all possessed chasubles or capes in this Gothic style. A particularly rich dalmatic is held at the church of Saint Lesmes in Burgos, dating from around 1500, which is made of velvet broadce in gold and adorned with small fringes of figures embroidered with *oro matizado*; the work was probably imported from Flanders.

Around 1510 certain embroiderers had incorporated the foliage, dolphins and cornucopia found in Italian engravings. An exceptional creation from these early times is the vestment which the bishop of Osma Alonso Enríquez, who had commissioned the vast portal of the parish of St. Mary of Aranda, donated to this parish. The ground fabric is a luxurious brocade of gold in three levels adorned with artichokes. The dalmatics combine symmetrical embroidery with foliages, cornucopia and dolphins while the fringes of the chasuble were adorned with scenes of the Passion inspired by engravings from Schongauer placed beneath arches supported by classical style columns. In these early stages of the Renaissance figurative adornment in the form of chasubles, dalmatics, capes, frontals and cross covers became commonplace. The scenes, as is the case in the chasuble of Aranda or in a highly unusual chasuble in the Charterhouse of Miraflores, are embroidered with *oro matizado* which achieves a highly suggestive pictorial effect in spite of the inaccuracies of the figures. Never had Spanish embroidery been so fully developed, and never had the embroiderers come so close to the standards of painting.

Among the adornments of the early Renaissance are a chasuble and dalmatics from the monastery of Saint Clare in Medina de Pomar. They were made around 1520 and together with the vessels and foliage characteristic of the Renaissance they bear the coat of arms of Íñigo Fernández de Velasco and María Tovar. The church of Covarrubias preserves another notable set of vestments, commissioned to the embroiderer Marcos de Covarrubias and made around 1525, which bears the coat of arms of the constable. To cover the bodies of Íñigo Fernández de Velasco and his wife during the funeral held in the Velasco pantheon in Medina, the fourth Constable of Castile, Pedro Fernández de Velasco, ordered a shroud to be made showing the family arms and a central



7 GARCÍA DE SALAZAR, Lope, *Los bienandanzas y fortunas*. Bilbao, 1955, p. 40. [Ed. A. Rodríguez Herrero]. This must be the light that the flagship bears, and which leads the other ships that follow it. BARRÓN GARCÍA, A. A., “Patrimonio artístico y monumental: el legado de Juan Fernández de Velasco y familiares”, in *El monasterio de Santa Clara de Medina de Pomar. Fundación y Patronazgo de la Casa de Velasco*, Villarcayo, 2004, p. 225.

medallion with a globe which was covered mainly by seawater and a few sailing ships – a symbolic representation of the legend of the origin of the Velasco family. According to Lope García de Salazar, “the foundation of the House of Velasco Family was due to a Gothic knight, who followed the Goths who arrived in Santoña, who populated Carasa, who made their palaces there, and because he carried the light [vela] which guided the fleet at night, and for this reason his family was named Velasco”<sup>7</sup>. The story traces the origin of the family and the hopes of all of its members for transcendence; in their beginnings the Velascos had arrived at Santoña, and now the ships that transported the immortal souls aspired to reach the city of God.

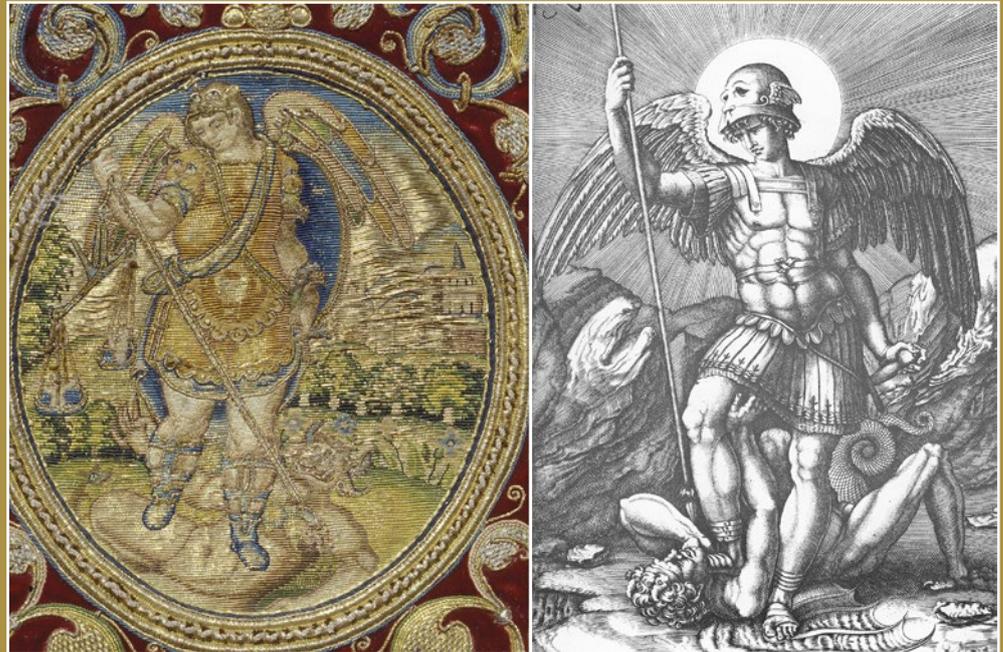
A chasuble and dalmatic of the deceased in the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Burgos, and another funeral vestment of the church of Saint Giles, which can be dated to 1520, are also adorned with embroidery a *candelieri*, laurels and other motifs of the early Renaissance. The church of Saint Giles in Burgos – a very rich vestment on purple velvet that is adorned with a band of figures inspired in some cases by engravings by Dürer – Bascuñana, Castil de Peones, Cañizar de Argaño – a luxurious crimson vestment, Covarrubias, Cebolleros, Moncalvillo, Pedrosa del Páramo, Pedrosa del Príncipe, Pinilla-Trasmonte, Prádanos de Bureba, Quintanapalla, Santa María del Campo, Sasamón, Torrepadre, Villadiego – a cape of velvet – Villahizán de Treviño and Yudego preserve chasubles or capes with bands adorned with figures of the apostles beneath half-pointed arches, some of them supported by columns. The iconography follows Nordic models, especially those of Schongauer and Dürer. They were made between 1510 and 1540.

Little is known of the embroiderers of the beginning of the century. In 1496 the embroiderers Luis Ferrández and García de Burgos were in the employ of the cathedral. From 1507 to 1538 the presence of Fernando de Palenzuela el Viejo is recorded. In 1508 the embroiderer Pedro Sánchez is documented; in

1512 the embroiderer Bernardino de Herrera received from Sasiola, the butler of the late constable Bernardino Fernández de Velasco, the sum of 37 700 maravedís which in observance of the constable's will he had been paid "to embroider a cloth that will be placed on the bodies of their late lordships". This was probably a funeral shroud adorned with the coat of arms of Velasco which was found some years ago in the Constable's chapel. It was probably made for the burial of Pedro Fernández de Velasco and Mencía de Mendoza, since his son Bernardino had to complete the chapel. Although the text mentions the shrouds, Bigarny was not paid until the following decade, but it is interesting to see that they might have been designed in 1512. Between 1515 and 1522 the following craftsmen are documented: Diego de Segovia, silkmaker; in 1520 Diego de Cabia, embroiderer; from 1529 to 1536, Bernardino Marañón, chasuble-maker, in the employ of the cathedral of Burgos; in 1536 Antonio de Grado, embroiderer; from 1538 to 1565 Fernando de Palenzuela (el Mozo), father of the embroiderers Juan, Fernando and Jerónimo de Palenzuela. In 1519 Pedro de Lunar embroidered the selvages of a cape and chasuble of crimson velvet for the church of Saint Stephen of Burgos; in 1525 the same embroiderer made for the cathedral of Burgos the skirts and sleeves of a brocade ornament and the pectorals and adornments of various capes of white damask in which he embroidered the coat of arms of the church, a vase of lilies; in 1543-1544 Lunar worked on the ornaments left by the bishop Íñigo López de Mendoza, and in 1546 he made a dalmatic for Quintanilla Somuño. In 1521 Cornelis de Monte finished a rich cloth cover in the cathedral of Burgos. In 1527 Pedro de Montehermoso embroidered the lower part and the cuffs of a dalmatic of the church of Saint Stephen of Burgos. Large commissions of this kind were frequently performed in collaboration with other craftsmen. The ornaments left by the cardinal Íñigo López de Mendoza were made between 1543 and 1544, and the following craftsmen were involved in the project: Antonio de Grado, Pedro Lunar, Juan de Palenzuela, Diego de Camiña el Viejo, Pedro de Camiña, Juan Díaz de Aranda, Francisco de Palenzuela, Nicolás de Palenzuela, the chasuble-maker Juan Sarabia and the embroiderer from Medina de Rioseco Francisco de Benavente, Francisco de Palenzuela's nephew, who embroidered some of the principal figures on the hood of the cape and the chasuble. The cloths were brought from Florence via France (Lyon and Nantes) and Bilbao. The fabrics and silks were valued at 236 976 maravedís and in completion reached the astonishing figure of 571 693 maravedís, slightly more than the 1500 ducats the cardinal had left in his will. With this amount eight brocade capes were made, along with a chasuble, two dalmatics, a frontal and three albs.

The rich ornaments were few in number, and they were often lent by one church to another. The cathedral, which was naturally the best supplied of the churches, lent its ornaments to other parishes in Burgos for the celebration of festivals. In 1541, the cathedral agreed to lend an ornament – and some sceptres, a very rare piece in those times – to the church of Saint Lesmes and recalled that the chasuble was also lent to the convents and to any gentleman who wished to say mass in his house. The situation changed in the second half of the century. The decrees of the council of Trent and the increasing solemnity that the Church aimed to impose on religious festivals meant that many parishes, moved by vigilance and the orders of the episcopal visitors, acquired vestments in the last decades of the sixteenth century to perform the acts of the liturgical service with the due decorum. The example of a small parish, such as Los Barrios de Bureba may illustrate the extent of the phenomenon. In 1574 this parish acquired a festive set of vestments from Jerónimo de Palenzuela and Nicolás Morquecho for a very high price: the cape, 78 456 maravedís; the brocade chasuble 72 617 and a dalmatic 67 922. Ten years later they acquired from the same embroiderers a chasuble for the deceased, which was completed with a cape and dalmatics commissioned to Diego de Medina Barruelo in 1587. It was only in 1597 that the processional cross was suitably adorned with a cover, which was also bought from Medina Barruelo.

In the second half of the sixteenth century new iconographic models taken from Dürer and from other engravers from Flanders and France became popular. Some embroiderers imitated Italian engravings such as those of Marcantonio Raimondi whose apostolates we find in medallions embroidered in the middle of the century; images of the Virgin Mary and other saints engraved by Raimondi based on creations by Raphael also circulated, such as a Saint Michael in a chasuble in Mahamud. Later, other embroiderers tried to renew the forms by incorporating the aesthetic of Michelangelo in a process that ran parallel to the diffusion of the Romanist style in sculpture. The figures inspired by Michelangelo drew more on embroidery than on other decorative arts such as grillwork or silverwork and which, under the influence of Juan de Arfe, was moving towards a classicism without adornment. The grillmakers and especially the silvermakers broke with the forms of mannerism, but the case of the embroiderers was different, as they continued to use adornments based on cut leathers, interlacing ribbons, C-shapes, acanthus leaves and foliage. In embroidery the adornment and the figure are applied on cloth, and forms and volume in space are not used. Perhaps for this reason, the forms of mannerism associated with the school of Fontainebleau endured for many years until well into the seventeenth century. Classical forms were not introduced;



Mahamud, engraving by Raimondi following Raphael.

nor did embroidery adopt the adornment of the stark classicism characteristic of the Escorial which is seen in other decorative arts from 1580 onwards. Liturgical ornaments, until roughly 1630, were embroidered with the same rich adornment as the creations of the late seventeenth century. Embroidery, though it could never attain the suggestive forms of blurred brush strokes, followed the same path as painting, an art with which it was very closely linked throughout the sixteenth century. In fact one of the techniques of figurative embroidery was termed “needle painting” – *acu pictae* – and Gutiérrez de los Ríos noted in 1600 that embroidery was the sister art of painting. In any case, the pragmatics against luxury and excessive dress issued during the end of the reign of Philip II and which remained in force under Philip III held figurative embroidery back between 1600 and 1620. In addition, throughout the seventeenth century, Burgos and Castile in general suffered an acute economic crisis. The luxurious, costly, figurative embroidery gave way to floral adornments, the grotesques and the compositions of cut leather displayed symmetrically and without the presence of images.

The numbers of embroiderers in the second half of the century increased considerably and many contracts were signed to create church vestments. In 1560 Juan de Sarabia, who had appeared in the records since 1543, received a salary from the cathedral of Burgos as a maker of stoles and chasubles. Later, in 1580, Alonso de Camiña held the post of embroiderer to the cathedral. In that year, on the request of Alonso’s widow, who must have known how to embroider, he was succeeded by his son Miguel de Camiña, who was twenty-two years of age and had not yet been examined, and Andrés de Ochandiano, an experienced master and Miguel’s brother-in-law. In February 1593, after the death of Ochandiano, Simón de Axpe was embroiderer to the cathedral until he died in 1625. The trade of embroiderer was passed on from fathers to sons, and in Burgos there were several families of embroiderers which were closely connected to each other. Apart from the Palenzuela Family, we find Diego de Camiña, who died in 1578 and was the father of Gaspar de Camiña, and his

brother Alonso de Camiña, who died in 1580 and was the father of Miguel de Camiña who made a will in 1599. The silver-maker Francisco de Berrio, who had trained in Alonso's workshop, married Alonso's widow and remained active until the 1620s. Nicolás Morquecho, whose name appears in the records from 1553 until 1590, worked with Fernando and Jerónimo de Palenzuela and with Alonso de Camiña, Francisco de Berrio and Diego de Medina Barruelo from Lerma. Diego de Medina was father of Lucas de Medina, who married Felipa de Axpe, and Diego Díaz de Medina. Simón de Axpe was one of the finest of the embroiderers of the end of the century; among those who learnt the trade along with him were his brother Juan Ortiz de Zárate, and his cousins Pedro Ortiz de Zárate and Donato Ortiz de Zárate who was also Miguel de Camiña's son-in-law. Other embroiderers were Martín Sanz de Carabantes, very active between 1591 and 1616 and a frequent collaborator of Simón de Axpe and Diego de Medina Barruelo; Tomás Macías, who died in 1586; Miguel Laurel, brother-in-law of Macías and documented between 1577 and 1601; Juan Sobrón, who died in 1599; and Juan Sotero, whose name appears in the records between 1596 and 1617.

Many embroidered creations were made in the second half of the century in accordance with the instructions laid down by the Council of Trent regarding the liturgy and the decorum expected in church affairs. In the mid-sixteenth century several ornaments were made in which the figures are framed inside circular medallions bearing foliage, griffins and other figures in gold thread. We should mention the wonderful vestments of Cobia (made by at least two embroiderers), a chasuble and dalmatic from Covarrubias, another chasuble from Villanueva de Argaño made by Diego de Camiña in 1575 and some dalmatics from Yudego, probably by the same embroiderer.

The crimson vestments of Cadiñanos, extremely well preserved, are among the first to bear cut leather in the frame of the medallions. The chasuble and the dalmatics must date from 1550 and conform to the styles of the end of the Renaissance. The shot silks and gold were applied completely to the medallions and were used both in the figures and the landscapes, achieving a remarkable pictorial effect. The richness of the ensemble is also visible in the strips, embroidered with great care and originality. In the vestments, along with a finely drawn grotesque, we find the cut leather again around the figures on the cape, a piece that must have been embroidered last, around 1560. It is the work of Jerónimo de Palenzuela and Nicolás Morquecho. Of a similar quality are the vestments from [Barbadillo del Mercado](#) which can also be attributed to Morquecho, and from Los Balbases with the figures embroidered in gold and velvet. The chasuble from Vizcaínos de la Sierra is by another fine embroiderer



Barbadillo del Mercado, engraving of IHS Master.

using cut velvet, although the embroidery is not as rich as that used in the other works mentioned.

One of the most elaborate vestments from the middle of the century is from Palacios de la Sierra, although its medallions and figurative elements have undergone excessive restoration. It incorporates grotesques inspired by the prints of the school of Fontainebleau, but the style of the embroiderer can be appreciated only in the lower part and the cuffs of the dalmatics which were embroidered with traditional grotesques though some of the branches bend around the cut leather. Better preserved are the crimson velvet vestments and figures embroidered in *oro matizado* from Mahamud (highly ornate, with the velvet embroidered *al pasado* and medallions in gold thread), from Villahizán de Treviño (one of the finest vestments embroidered in Burgos, perhaps by Alonso or Diego de Camiña), Los Balbases, Pedrosa de Río Urbel, the work of Jerónimo de Palenzuela in 1568, a dalmatic from Santa Gadea del Cid, and a chasuble from Villaverde Mogina.

Numerous creations are preserved from the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth. The embroiderer of the cape of Salas de los Infantes places the figures inside great ovals or mirrors inside complex bands of cut leather embroidered with *setillo* and gold twist. In the hood there is an Ascension in the Roman style which spread the art of Gaspar Becerra and the images of Juan de Anchieta in Burgos and Briviesca. In the cloth covering the lectern in the same parish, probably the work of the same embroiderer (possibly Simón de Axpe), the ovals containing St Lawrence and St Vincent are held in place with large “C” shapes and covered in acanthus leaves. The chasuble, also the work of the same embroiderer, is a wonderful creation, adorned with scenes of the Virgin in ovals framed by bands and



spirals embroidered with *setillo* and gold thread. Some compositions, such as Mary's Bath, are inspired by engravings by Cornelis Cort (in this case, an engraving dating from 1568 from an illustration by Tadeo Zuccaro). Given the coincidences in some of the medallions and the date (around 1600), the same embroiderer (or possibly Diego de Medina Barruelo), must have made the vestments from Barbadillo del Mercado; in the hood of the cape we see an Annunciation which follows very closely an engraving of IHS Master dating from 1566. Other excellent chasubles are the ones from Villambistia and from the church in Borcos in Las Hormazas; they bear embroidered figures in a style similar to others which can be attributed to Simón de Axpe, who made a dalmatic for Quintanadueñas in 1596.

The dalmatics and the chasuble of Villahoz are decorated with great mirrors of figures and foliage similar to those of the humeral veil of Salas de los Infantes, although the pieces from Villahoz are embroidered in fine *oro matizado* and coloured silks. Simón de Axpe made the chasuble of the Charterhouse of Miraflores adorned with the Coronation of the Virgin and the figure of St John the Baptist inside ovals and in poses that suggest the influence of Romanism. The beautiful vestments of Poza de la Sal, the work of Simón de Axpe, were entirely remade in the nearby convent of Castil de Lences. Here also the cross made of *oro lucio* and *setillo* was added to a modern fabric to decorate the altar frontal, commissioned by Martín Sanz de Carabantes in 1601, the same year as the vestments made by Axpe. Simón de Axpe, the most active embroiderer at the end of the century, also embroidered a dalmatic in Quintanapalla recorded in 1596. Its figures are embroidered with shot silks, while various types of *setillo* are used for the leather bands that frame the figurative ovals and the hanging fruit. A hood depicting the Ascension in Romanist style was added to the cape belonging to the parish.

Some of the less costly ornaments have only small figures embroidered with shot silk or *punto rajel*, or no figures at all, and the fringes are covered with Romanist adornments arranged symmetrically: examples are a chasuble from Hontomín, a chasuble from Miñón, a chasuble from Quintanadueñas, a chasuble and dalmatic from the church of Saint Lawrence in Villadiego,

a chasuble from Quintana de Valdivielso, dalmatics from Quintanar de la Sierra, a chasuble from Villangómez, a cape from Villambistia, a chasuble from Santa Gadea del Cid – by Alonso Camiña, de 1579, which contains five figures in *punto rajel* – a chasuble from Solano in Las Hormazas made by Diego de Medina Barruelo in 1587 along with a frontal and a silk case for the cross, a chasuble from Pedrosa del Páramo, a chasuble from Lodoso, dated around 1600 with Romanist decoration, and a figure of St Christopher meticulously embroidered in *punto rajel*.

The cape and frontal from Hontoría del Pinar were embroidered in the early seventeenth century. Only the medallions of the cape and the frontal bear figures, the patron Saints Cosmas and Damian. The rest is adorned with interlinking ribbons and appliqué acanthus. In 1590 Francisco de Frías had made a chasuble with appliqué motifs for the same church. It is possible that he went on to make the cape and the frontal, which are both finer works.

In the last decades of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, numerous covers for the cross were made. The ones made for Tosantos and Lodoso made by Simón de Axpe after 1607 are preserved. The cloths for the funeral processions are simpler and bear skulls and bones, as do the shrouds. Pieces worth mentioning include a chasuble from Santibáñez-Zarzaguda, another excellent chasuble from Sasamón, others from Villamiel de Muño and Cañizar de Argaño and a cape from La Nuez de Abajo. The vestments for the deceased from the first half of the sixteenth century were adorned with motifs a *candelieri*, without any representation of death: examples are the vestments from the churches of Saint Giles and Saints Cosmas and Damian in Burgos. ●

# Reliquary bags, purses and pouches

by MERCÈ FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ

1 DE LINAS, Charles, Aumonières tirées de la collection de M.Oudet, à Bar-le-Duc, en *Anciens vêtements sacerdotaux et anciens tissus conservés en France*, Librairie archéologique Victor Didron, Paris, 1862

2 *Ibid.*, p.23. p29.

Bags and pouches have always been used to carry objects of value such as coins, documents, and relics.

In his *Aumonières tirées de la collection de M.Oudet, à Bar-le-Duc*<sup>1</sup>, Charles de Linas studied bags, purses, and pouches used in earlier times. He sought out the etymological roots of their names, compared them and described them, in some cases providing illustrations. De Linas went back to the Romans and Greeks, and associated the bags with the clothing worn by the people to whom they belonged.

The fifth chapter of the work centred on the Middle Ages, and listed and described the different types of bags used at that time: *bouges*, *bougettes*, *tasses*, *gibecières*, *aloières* and *escarcelles*. The *tasses* or *tassettes* were bags of varying sizes which were tied to the waist and which were used in the same way as pockets are used today. De Linas had the opportunity of drawing some of these pieces and pays special attention to one preserved at the Musée de Saint-Omer, embroidered in silk, and a second bag which he terms “Byzantine”, made of silk and silver. This latter piece was decorated with horizontal stripes of varying widths, in which crosses, fleur de lis and birds are depicted. Both bags are rectangular, crimped at the top with tied laces at the sides, and with tassels on the bottom part.

In his text De Linas wonders whether they had any use other than carrying relics<sup>2</sup>. In view of the disposition of the pattern in a single piece, he is sure that it was woven to make a bag.

Bags, purses and pouches of the time were made with rich cloth, and were woven and decorated with embroidery. We see examples in the sculptured bas reliefs of tombs and the documents kept in libraries and archives. In the lying figure of [Queen Berenguela of Navarre in the Abbey of the Piété-Dieu de l'Épau](#), the reproduction of the fabric of her rectangular alms purse is so subtle that the six coins inside can be seen; it is closed at the top by a lace and attached to the waist, and has three tassels at the bottom.

Documentary sources such as codices, Bibles and other books contain images of bags of many different kinds. The bags were generally rectangular or trapezoidal, and some were decorated with geometrical motifs or human figures.

Manesse Codex. 64r . 1300-1340.  
 Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg,  
 Cod. Pal. germ. 848 Große  
 Heidelberger Liederhandschrift.



In the *Codex Manesse* or *Grosse Heidelberger Liederhandschrift* (Heidelberg, University Library) we find a scene on **folio 64r** representing the sale of belts and bags of different shapes and colours. This illuminated mediaeval manuscript may have been ordered between 1300 and 1340 in Zurich by the Manesse family, and the copy may have been made by Johannes Hadlaub.

In one of the 150 colour illustrations, on **folio 40r** of the *Book of Chess, Dice and Tables* (in the original transcription *Juegos diversos de Axedrez, dados, y tablas con sus explicaciones, ordenados por mandado del Rey don Alfonso el sabio*) we see a rectangular drawstring pouch bearing decoration in its

3 Bibliothèque National de France. Fr13096, [fol.62](#)

4 NAVARRO, Miguel, “Pignora Sanctorum. En torno a las reliquias, su culto y las funciones del mismo”, in *Reliquias y relicarios en la expansión mediterránea de la Corona de Aragón. El tesoro de la Catedral de Valencia*. Generalitat Valenciana, 1998.

5 *D'azur et d'argent. L'art du blason en Champagne*. 10 juin-30 août 2000. Cour d'Honneur de l'Hotel-Dieu. Troyes. Association des Amis des Archives de l'Aube. 2000. p.65.

lower part in the form of lozenges and a fringe at the bottom. This book was commissioned by King Alfonso X, between 1251 and 1283.

In the fourteenth-century volume *Apocalypse figurée*<sup>3</sup>, preserved in the French National Library, on folio 62, we find in the upper part of the illustration eight trapezoidal and rectangular alms purses woven with geometric designs.

Examples of the bags depicted in these books and documents survive today in collections and in the treasuries of European cathedrals. This suggests that at one point they would have contained and transported important objects linked to these religious institutions, most probably relics.

The fervour and devotion that mediaeval society professed for relics is well known. It was not just due to their supposedly miraculous powers, but also because they allowed men and women to revive and evoke their faith. People needed to embody the divine, and relics – the visible manifestation of the presence of God, of Christ, and of the saints – served this purpose.

As objects of veneration, relics were kept in the foremost places in the churches: the crypt, the altar, the chapels, or the sacristy. With time the reliquaries became richer, and the small round containers known as pyxes were replaced by urns and small chests adorned with precious stones, busts, or images.

The reliquaries were often made in distinctive artistic styles and became objects of ostentation; they were sometimes traded and might also be used as pledges when loans were made or when booty was being distributed after a military campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Among the pieces preserved in the collections in Central Europe we have made a selection of the ones that may shed light on the origin and production of a bag kept at the Archive of the Cathedral of Valencia. The pieces in question are the reliquary pouch in the Liebfrauenkirche in Valeria de Sion (Switzerland), the bags in the cathedrals of Sens and Saint-Pierre et Saint Paul of Troyes in France, bags from the Church of Saint-Etienne in Sommerain and the Church of Saint-Vincent in Soignies in Belgium, and the one preserved in the Schnütgen-Museum in Cologne, Germany.

One of the two reliquary pouches that appear to be closely connected to the one in the Archive of the Cathedral of Valencia was part of the exhibition *D'azur et d'argent. L'art du blason en Champagne*<sup>5</sup>. This pouch bore the arms of the Counts of Champagne, and belongs to the Treasury of the Cathedral of Troyes. It is believed to have been made in the thirteenth century.

Woven with a tapestry technique in a rectangular shape (dimensions 20 x 23.5 cm) and closed at the top with a braided ribbon, it is thought to have been used to hold the relics offered by the Counts of Champagne to the Hôtel-



Reliquary pouch with the coat of arms of the Counts of Champagne. Treasury of the Cathedral de Troyes. Thirteenth century.

Reliquary pouch. Thirteenth century. Church of Saint-Etienne, Sommerain. Currently deposited at the Museum of Piconrue, Bastogne.



6 Notes by Martine Plantec (Restoration workshop, LP3 Conservation Semur-en-Auxois.)

7 N° inventory A20040816005

8 The strip is 34-37 cm wide.

Dieu. The decorative motifs are arranged in horizontal bands, of which there are five on the obverse, where a small rosette and a coat of arms alternate on a pale green background. The exhibition catalogue states that the bag is lined with a blue cloth, possibly linen, and has a green linen pocket.<sup>6</sup>

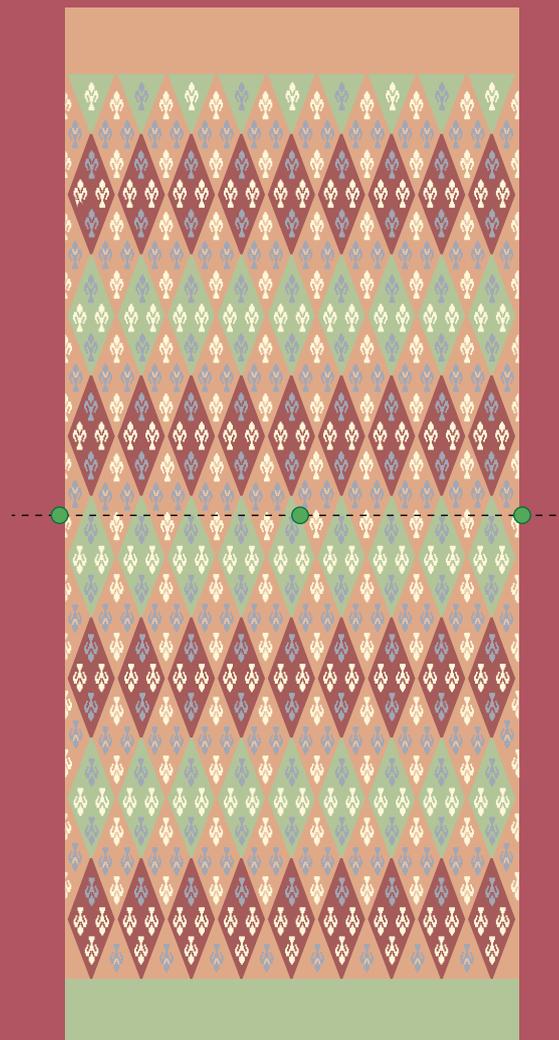
Very similar in terms of decoration, colour and size is the **pouch of the Church of Saint-Etienne** in Sommerain, Belgium, preserved at the museum in Piconrue<sup>7</sup>. It was made in Cologne, Germany, in the thirteenth century. Here we also find rosettes and heraldic coats of arms, possibly of the lords of Luxembourg, on a green background and like the previous example, it is woven using a tapestry technique.

The bag preserved in Valencia is slightly larger than the two described so far. It measures 26.5 x 23 cm) and has three tassels at the bottom which are 3.5-4 cm long. The strip at the aperture, which is closed with a braided ribbon, is salmon pink on one side and green on the other<sup>8</sup>. In the case of the two other

Reliquary pouch, Archive of the Cathedral of Valencia. Photograph: Mercè Fernández.



The reliquary pouch in the Archive of the Cathedral of Valencia. Graphic: Nuria Martínez.



-  Fleur de lis woven in metal thread
-  Fleur de lis woven in silk thread
-  Tassel
-  Fold line

9 The lozenges are 5.2 to 6.5 cm long.

bags we do not know if the colour changes or if this pattern is repeated, as we do not have access to both sides of the pieces.

The bag was woven in silk and metal spiral thread with a tapestry technique and its decoration comprises a structure of *lozenges*<sup>9</sup> which alternate their colours in rows: green, salmon pink, and claret.

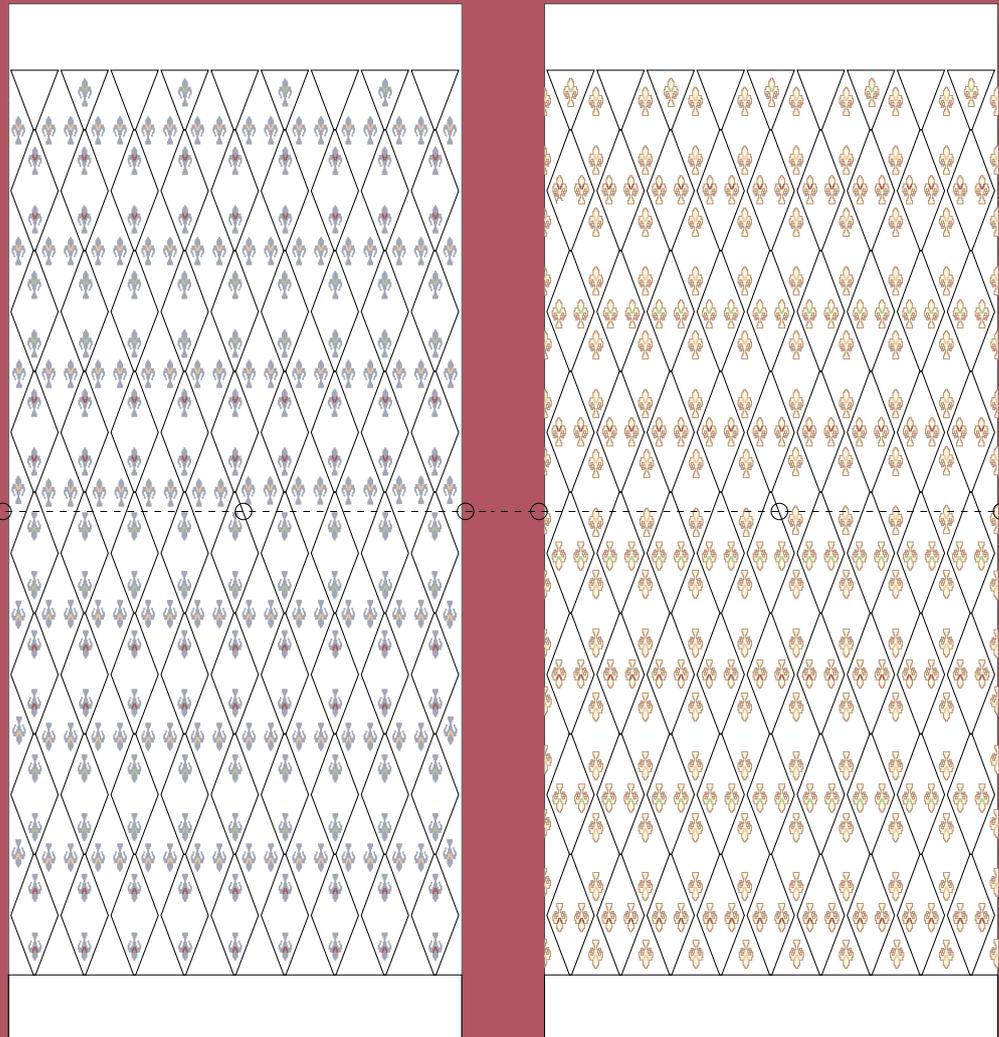
In each of the angles of the lozenge motif is a fleur de lis woven with metal spiral thread or ivory silk. The sequence is as follows: one row of metal thread, then one row that alternates a flower in silk and another in metal thread, the third all in silk, and the fourth again alternates silk and metal thread.

Seeing the pattern unfolded in the illustration, it is clear that it was woven in a single piece and, as Charles de Linas states, was meant to be converted into a bag or pouch. Its decoration was designed in such a way that, when it was folded down the centre, the flowers would still be arranged correctly on both sides.

The reliquary pouch in the Archive of the Cathedral of Valencia.  
Graphics: Núria Martínez.

Arrangement of the fleur de lis woven in metal spiral thread.

Arrangement of the fleur de lis woven in silk thread.



- Fleur de lis woven in metal thread
- Fleur de lis woven in silk thread
- Tassel
- Fold line

10 BAYES, Montserrat, *Mil anys de punt. Pluralisme i interrogants*, in *Mil anys de disseny en punt*. Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil. Terrassa, Terrassa, 1997. p.45-46.  
11 N° inventory 26160.

In the interior, as was also the case in the bag in the treasury of Troyes, there is a blue linen lining with a pocket inside.

The descriptions of the pieces from Bastogne and from Troyes speak of direct references to heraldic motifs, but this is not so clear in the piece from Valencia; it may just be a decorative motif.

The ornamentation of fabrics with similar motifs but made using different techniques recalls one of the cushions made by Fernando de la Cerda, which on one side presents a series of diamonds with fleur de lis and the eagle of Swabi<sup>10</sup>. Another of the references is found in the Musée Historique des Tissus in Lyon, which preserves a fragment of embroidery *à petit point*<sup>11</sup> with a *lozange* decoration containing rampant lions, heraldic motifs and stylized flowers, and the distribution of the colours is similar to that of the bag in the Archive of the Cathedral of Valencia. This fragment is believed to have been made in Switzerland, possibly in the fourteenth century.

**12** VIAL, Gabriel. “Anhang technischer Katalog”, in *Spuren kostbarer Gewebe. Riggisberger Berichte*, 3, Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg, 1995, p.255.

**13** FLURY-LEMBERG, Mechthild. ILLEK, Gisela. *Spuren kostbarer Gewebe. Riggisberger Berichte*, 3, Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg, 1995.

Finally we should mention a third fabric, made with tapestry technique (*tapisserie à relais*<sup>12</sup>), which appears in the publication *Der sogenannte Ornat des heiligen Valerius von Zaragoza aus der Kathedrale von Lerida*<sup>13</sup> described as the cover of the brooch of the cloak of Saint Valerius. The fabric is decorated with rampant lions inside complete *lozenges*, while the incomplete *lozenges* at the sides, the top and the bottom present half fleurs de lis, as described by Gabriel Vial in his technical analysis.

These descriptions – both the documents and the textiles themselves – bear witness to a type of textile creation which has not been studied in depth but has a great heritage value. The reliquary pouch in the archive of the Cathedral of Valencia is a fine example. ●

# Bobbin lace in *modernista* Catalonia: the search for Europe and the search for modernity\*

by JOAN MIQUEL LLODRÀ

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\* This article is a summary of the lecture given at the International Congress *Coup de fouet* held in Barcelona in June 2013.

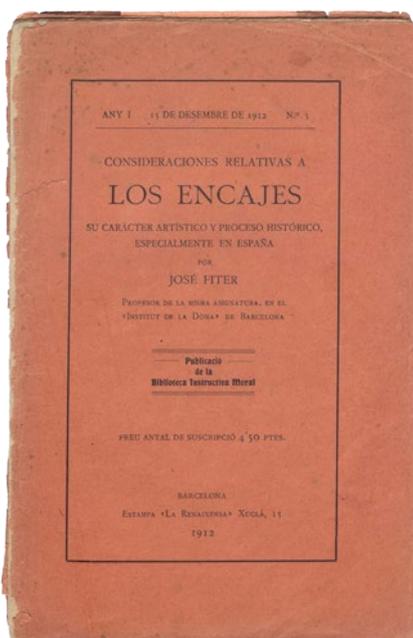
Arts and crafts experienced a major revival in Catalonia during the *modernista* period, and the art of bobbin lace was no exception. Within a traditionally local context, lace producers, entrepreneurs, and designers all adopted, to some extent, a more cosmopolitan outlook in keeping with the spirit of modernity and progress that had generated the Universal Exhibition of 1888.

The aim of this article is to continue the efforts (led for some years now by the Arenys de Mar Lace Museum) to restore bobbin lace production to its rightful place inside the historiography of Catalan art. My focus will be one of the many lectures given by Josep Fiter i Inglés (Barcelona, 1857-1915), one of Spain's leading bobbin lace manufacturers and an active member of the entrepreneurial, intellectual, artistic and associative life of the Catalonia of the end of the nineteenth century. Fiter was a key figure in the (as yet unwritten) history of Catalan lace.

On the occasion of the first National Exhibition of Artistic Industries and International Exhibition of Reproductions held in Barcelona in 1892, Josep Fiter gave a lecture entitled *Considerations regarding lace. Its artistic character and historical process, especially in Spain*. In this lecture the expert lacemaker listed a series of key points that can help us to understand the situation of lace during the *modernista* period.

Fiter demonstrated his thorough acquaintance with the extensive bibliography on lace available in foreign countries. He particularly stressed the work of Felix Aubrey, Fanny Bury-Pallisser and Ernest Lefebure, all of whom remain important reference points for scholars today. Fiter lamented the fact that Catalans and Spanish writers had not decided to study this industrial art. He mentions the few local authors who had shown interest in lace production: the art critic and collector Miquel i Badia, the fabric and lace designer Tomàs i Estruch, and the historian and critic Sanpere i Miquel, who would all become important figures in the history of industrial arts and crafts in Catalonia.

Cover of the booklet containing Josep Fiter's lecture in 1892. Arenys de Mar Museum.



Multi-coloured blonde lace by Francesc Tomàs i Estruch and Josep Fiter, 1885.  
Design Museum of Barcelona, nº reg 10650.





Exhibition room in the old Lace Museum in the Palau de la Virreina, inaugurated in 1968, Design Museum of Barcelona.

During the *modernista* period, a fledgling historiographical bibliography began to emerge in an attempt to raise the profile of Catalonia inside Europe. To a large extent it imitated developments in the rest of the continent, and was led in part by the writings and lectures of Fiter himself. In spite of his efforts and those of other writers such as Adelaida Ferre and Pilar Huguet, the bibliography on lace in Catalonia was never as diverse in terms of its themes or as profound in terms of its analysis as that published in the rest of Europe or in the United States. In fact, in the US a great many public and private lace collections began to emerge at this time.

Fiter also spoke with regret of two aspects linked to the training of lace and blond lace makers: the lack of museums, and the lack of specialist schools. Well acquainted with the debate on the application of arts to industry Fiter echoed the thoughts of other artists, academics, intellectuals and industrialists in Catalonia in considering museums as vital places for learning.

After discussing the lace pieces held at museums in Barcelona, Fiter called for the creation of a museum devoted exclusively to this industrial art and suggested some examples that might be taken as a model: the South Kensington Museum, the museums in Vienna and Brussels, the Musée Historique des Tissus de Lyon, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, and the museums of Cluny and Puy-en-Velay, all of which remain reference points in the world of textiles today.

The creation of museums as places where artists and designers could pursue their training was a constant feature of Fiter's thought on the role of art in industry. For example, the magazine *Arte Decorativo*, founded in 1894 by Fiter himself and published by the Centre for Decorative Arts, insisted on the importance of learning decorative illustration and on the careful observation of the past and present; museums, said Fiter, were the ideal place for inculcating both. Sadly, he passed away long before the creation of the [Museum of Lace in the Palau de la Virreina](#) in 1968, a museum as rich as it was ephemeral.

Nevertheless, Fiter made his contribution to the formation of the public lace collections in his role of adviser to the Library Board and the History Museum, set up in 1891. During the modernista period, the Municipal Board of Museums and Fine Arts took a great interest in the textile arts of embroidery, printing, tapestry and lace, and was keen to acquire both original creations and reproductions in thread or on paper. The pieces assembled became the collection of the Museum of Decorative Art, which opened in 1902 and was designed by the architect Puig i Cadafalch, who was a member of a lacemaking family from Mataró. The board acquired both individual pieces and entire collections as well. The museum obtained a number of interesting samples, but unfortunately a number of extraordinary pieces were missed, such as the collection of Josep Pascó, purchased in 1908 by the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon.

To return to the lecture, in addition to the absence of museums, Fiter lamented the lack of schools offering training. He was familiar with the system of teaching at the School of Arts and Crafts in Barcelona, the Llotja, which focused more on theory than on practice – that is, more on design than on technique. Fiter was critical of this; along with most European lacemakers of the time, he believed that the only way to compete with machine-made lace was to produce work that stood out in terms of both style and technical ability.

Fiter would have had either direct or indirect knowledge of the schools of lace which had emerged in Europe throughout the nineteenth century, especially the Royal Central School of Lace of Vienna, founded in 1879. The Royal Central School provided theoretical and practical training for lacemakers. Its philosophy was that design artists should be technically proficient and well acquainted with the materials used to produce high quality lace – exactly what Fiter was advocating for Catalonia.

For Fiter, the disappearance of the guilds had caused a breakdown in the transmission of knowledge, and schools along the lines of the school in Vienna had a vital part to play in remedying this situation. The teaching of drawing, the history of the craft, and the teaching of French would be important parts of the syllabus. Of course, the ideal school should have a library and a museum.

Fiter also had words for lace and blonde lace illustrators who, since the mid-nineteenth century, had begun to shake off the anonymity in which they had lived for centuries in Catalonia. As had been the case in the rest of the applied arts, lace illustrators – men and women who had learnt their trade for the most part outside the family or the *guild* environment – began to be considered as artists and sought credit for the **originality of their designs**.

Like his colleagues Francesc Tomas Estruch and Jaume Brugarolas, Fiter played an important role in the promotion and modernization of the industrial



The former History Museum of Barcelona, in the Castle of the Three Dragons, late nineteenth century. Historical Archive of Canet de Mar.

arts in the Catalonia of the late nineteenth century. As illustrators during the *modernista* period they also played their part in the continuation of an aesthetic which still enjoyed the support of a large proportion of the traditional clientele.

However, Fiter saw that the last years of the nineteenth century ushered in a new era of quality and beauty in lace production. As an example of its resurgence, he mentions some of the pieces presented at the Vatican Exhibition in honour of Leon XIII held in 1887 and 1888, another of the many exhibitions of artistic industries held in Europe during the nineteenth century ([See \*Datatèxtil\*, nº 25](#)).

It is interesting that Fiter's lecture should include a reference to the exhibitions. Alongside the schools and the museums, exhibitions were a constant theme in the nineteenth century debate on art and industry. A study of the catalogues of art exhibitions of the period, in Catalonia, elsewhere in Europe and occasionally in the United States, shows that lace and blond lace were always among the products present.

In any case, the fact is that the exhibitions and samples represented the best way to commercialize production both at home and abroad. These displays represented a strong incentive for the illustrators since, in addition to showing their designs, they could also profit financially and in fact many of their pieces found their way into public museums. Many lace competitions were held in Catalonia in the first quarter of the twentieth century, following the model of neighbouring countries like France.



Design for a lace fan by Aurora Gutiérrez Larraya, early twentieth century. White gouache on paper, Arenys de Mar Museum, n° reg 355.

In the generation that followed Fiter, Tomàs Estruc, and Brugarolas, we find Marià Castells Simon (1876-1931), a member of an important lacemaking family from Arenys, and Aurora Gutiérrez Larraya (d. 1920), a specialist in the kinds of work that women performed at that time. Both of them often participated in exhibitions of artistic industries, presenting works which introduced the centuries-old art of lace into all the variants of the new aesthetic of European *art nouveau*. Their designs are clear proof of the place of lace in the *modernista* movement.

The illustrations of these two designers preserved at the Arenys de Mar Museum – most of them dating from the early twentieth century– present patterns of lace for napkins, bed linen, table cloths and fans which reflect the delicacy and subtlety of symbolism, the energetic *coup de fouet* of *art nouveau*, the geometrism of the *Sezession* and the references to the past of neo-Gothicism.

Neither Josep Fiter nor the other figures mentioned in this study were witness to the decline of lace from the 1930s onwards. In their own ways they all played their part in establishing lace as an important component of the *modernista* movement in Catalonia and the search for a national identity, and in the wider *art nouveau* movement in Europe as a whole and the conception of a new modernity. ●

# *La niña obrera (The Working Girl),* by Juan Planella y Rodríguez: A depiction of the Industrial Revolution in Catalonia<sup>1</sup>

by JUAN C. BEJARANO VEIGA

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, in my analysis I will not distinguish between the two versions of the paintings that we have today. See my articles (biography, analysis of the painting, artistic context) for the Museum of the History of Catalonia, Barcelona, in May – July 2013, on the presentation of the replica of *La niña obrera* acquired by this institution in an auction at Balclis. BEJARANO, Juan C., “El Museu presenta... *La nena obrera* (c. 1885) de Joan Planella i Rodríguez”, *Museu d’Història de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 2013: <http://www.mhcat.cat/content/view/full/8404>.

<sup>2</sup> *Índex de defuncions. Homes A-Z*, 1910, Vol. 697, nº reg. 7062. Municipal Archive, Barcelona.

<sup>3</sup> Preserved at the MNAC, Barcelona (nº inv. MNAC 002898-D). Even though on the reverse we read “*dibuix de Gabriel Planella. Començaments del s. XIX*”, it is currently attributed to Juan Planella, probably due to its evident similarity to *La niña obrera*. We think that this attribution is mistaken; apart from questions of style, the man’s dress, and the handloom on which he

In 1824, Gabriel Planella painted *La tienda de indianas* (The calico print shop – now housed at the Barcelona City History Museum), which was probably used as an advertisement in the entrance of a retail establishment. More than fifty years later, a member of the same family, who was also a painter, Juan Planella y Rodríguez (Barcelona, 2-2-1849 – 21-6-1910<sup>2</sup>) painted *La niña obrera* (The working girl), a masterpiece of pictorial realism and one of the most powerful depictions of the harsh working conditions in the Catalan textile industry. At the start of the nineteenth century, Gabriel had taught drawing at the Llotja school and had designed models for printing on fabrics. His painting, *La tienda de indianas*, was the result of this experience, and he used it to show off the beauty of these motifs. Juan, on the other hand, preferred to look behind the scenes; his work portrays the darker side of the textile industry. In the period between the two paintings, Gabriel made an interesting drawing of the inside of a workshop where a man is working with a *bergadana* spinning frame, which is in a way a forerunner of the painting that Juan Planella would paint later<sup>3</sup>. In fact this illustration acts as the link between these two members of a dynasty of artists, and draws together the two sides of the textile industry in nineteenth-century Catalonia.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century industrial themes were making a belated appearance in Catalan painting. Traditionally there was always a time gap between the emergence of artistic trends in Europe and their arrival in Spain, but the Industrial Revolution was also slow to take off in a country which remained predominantly rural. In 1882<sup>4</sup>, then, *La niña obrera* was a pioneering work; Planella, a resident of Barcelona, was aware of the fact that he

is working would have been out-of-date at the time when Planella painted his painting. We are grateful to Manoli Yeste and Jaume Perarnau, director of the mNACTEC in Terrassa, for their help.

<sup>4</sup> It is traditionally believed that the first version dates from 1882, although an analysis of the date reveals that the last number was altered at some point, and now appears to be either a 2

or a 4: probably, and as he did in the replica, Planella changed the date to be able to present the painting at a certain exhibition – a common practice at the time.

Juan Planella y Rodríguez. *La niña obrera* (The working girl) c. 1882. Oil on canvas. Private collection. [See detail](#). Photo: © Setdart.





Gabriel Planella y Conxello. *Weaver at the loom*, First half of the nineteenth century. Drawing on paper. © MNAC, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Barcelona (MNAC 002898-D). [See detail](#). Photos: Calveras/Mérida/Sagrístà.

5 NADAL, Jordi, “La formació de la indústria moderna”, in *Catalunya, la fàbrica d'Espanya. Un segle d'industrialització catalana 1833-1936*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1985, pp. 43-113.

6 This textile entrepreneur created the Pensión Fortuny to promote the training of Catalan artists in Rome. Planella was the winner of the first award, and was thus able to live in the Italian capital between 1875 and 1877.

7 Joan Llimona (1860-1926) – Josep Llimona (1864-1934), MNAC, Barcelona, 2004, p. 85.

8 SOLER, Jaume, *J. M. Tamburini*, Àmbit-Fundació Caixa de Barcelona, Barcelona, 1989, p. 15.

was living in the most industrialized city in the Iberian Peninsula, with a large concentration of textile manufactures, especially in the cotton sector.

Among the many factories in Barcelona were the Batlló and the Vapor Vell or the Vapor Nou (also known as La España Industrial). Of these last two (both located in Sants) the first belonged to the Güell family and the second to the Muntadas i Campeny brothers<sup>5</sup>. Planella might have chosen any of these scenarios for his painting, or one of the factories owned by his patron Fernando Puig i Gibert<sup>6</sup> or by the latter's son-in-law, Camilo Fabra, a collector of Planella's work and the owner of three factories, two of them in Barcelona. Or perhaps it was a fictitious reconstruction based on the factories that Planella knew. This remains a mystery today, as we know nothing about how Planella worked – that is, whether he painted his work *in situ* or on the basis of previous research.

But what was it that aroused Planella's interest in factories? Like Santiago Rusiñol, Ramon Casas, Joan and Josep Llimona<sup>7</sup>, Josep Maria Tamburini<sup>8</sup>, Josep Lluís Sert<sup>9</sup> and Joaquim Mir<sup>10</sup>, Planella was able to dedicate himself to art thanks to a source of income that was firmly rooted in the textile trade. While in the other cases this economic support came from the artists' families, our painter received funds from the industrialist Fernando Puig. However, most of the artists preferred to keep their income quiet – in fact only Rusiñol (in the beginning) and Planella were brave enough to mention it<sup>11</sup>.

9 SERT, Comte de – ARNUS, Maria del Mar, *Sert*, Nou Art Thor, Barcelona, 1989, p. 3.

10 Mir's uncle Avelino Trinxet y Casas supported him financially so that he could

devote himself to painting. Years later, his grandson Avelino Trinxet Pujol took over the family business and bought the original version of *La niña obrera*.

11 Rusiñol painted *La fàbrica* in 1889 (Foment del Treball Nacional, Barcelona) and *Industria lanera* (1890-1891). Pere Isern painted *Fàbrica de tejidos de algodón* in 1896.



The Can Saladrigas factory in Poblenou, Barcelona (probably late nineteenth/early twentieth century). Photo: MNACTEC archive.

<sup>12</sup> We know that he frequented the *Café Nou* de la Rambla and the *Club Federalista* in Carrer Nou (see respectively: GENER, Pompeyus, “*Lamich Vilanova*”, *Joventut*, any VI, nº 289, Barcelona, 24-8-1905, pp. 542-544; and ELIAS, Feliu, *Simó Gómez. Història verídica d’un pintor del Poble Sec*, Junta Municipal d’Exposicions d’Art de Barcelona, 1913, p. 54).

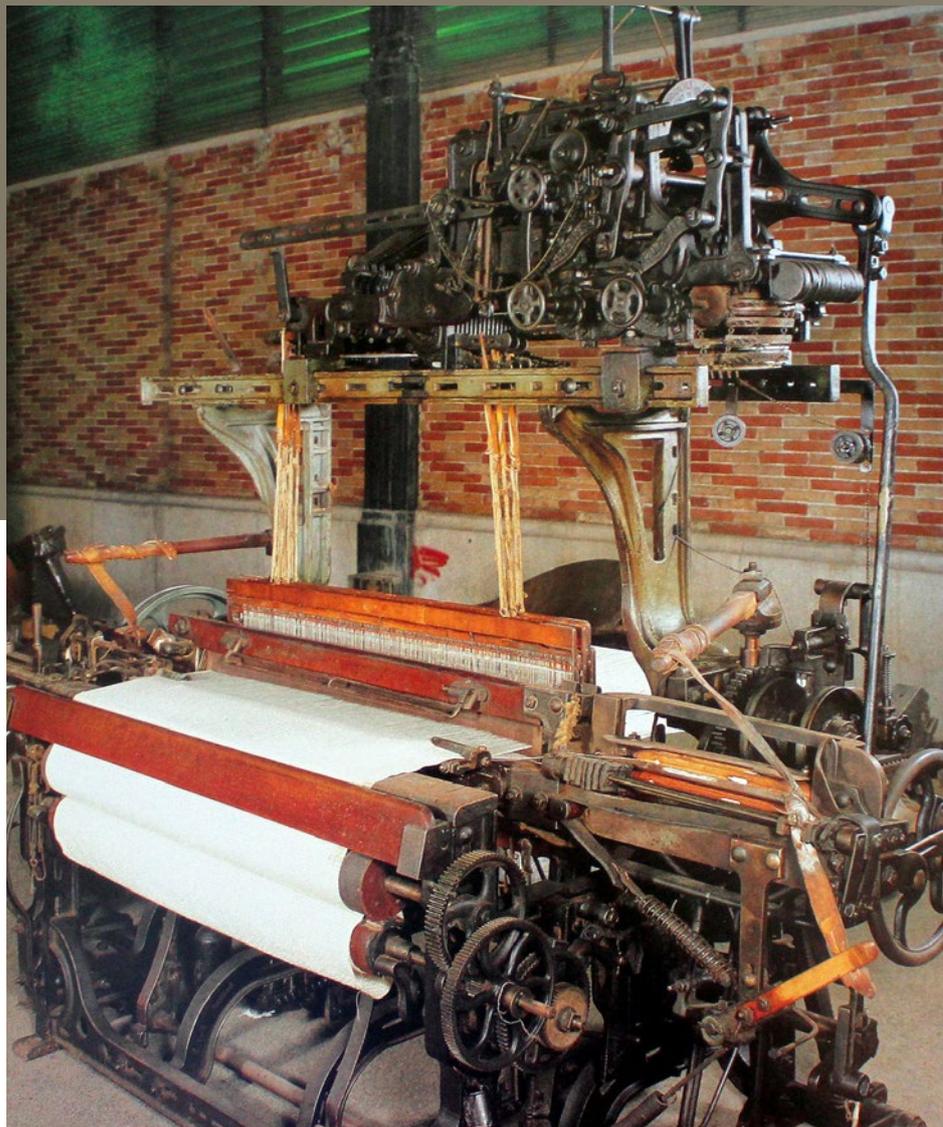
<sup>13</sup> FERNÁNDEZ FLÓREZ, Isidoro, “Exposición de Bellas Artes. Artículo V. Los demás cuadros”, *La Ilustración española y americana*, año XXVIII, nº XXIV, Madrid, 30-6-1884, p. 399.

<sup>14</sup> V. T., “Artes y Ciencias. Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes. Pintura.- Sala F. VI”, *La Iberia*, año XXXI, nº 8.909, segunda edición, Madrid, 5-6-1884, [p. 2].

From his beginnings, Planella showed an interest in expressing the reality he saw around him, in scenes like the *Siesta del obrero* (The workman’s siesta, 1872) and *Incidente de una huelga* (Incident in a strike, 1889). The choice of theme suggests that he was an artist concerned with the tribulations of the proletariat. We do not know for sure what drew him to paint these scenes – whether it was merely a wish to depict everyday life, or rather a desire to draw attention to the social problems of the time. Nonetheless, to judge from the circles he moved in<sup>12</sup>, he must have had republican and federalist ideas; so we can imagine that he was an artist of progressive beliefs and a social conscience. Child labour had become a particularly pressing matter in need of urgent reform. In Spain, the *Ley Benot* (Benot Act) regulating child labour in workshops and the provision of schooling for working-class children was passed in 1873, but it had so little effect that in 1884 stricter legislation in the form of a royal order was introduced to oversee its observance.

So the theme that Planella chose was a very topical one; in fact, he presented his painting in the same year as the royal order. He might be accused of opportunism, but the image he created was not at all sensationalist. Unlike other contemporary representations of working children, his work stood out for its sobriety and lack of sentimentality: instead of the typical frontal view, the girl is placed perpendicular to the observer, avoiding eye contact and arousing sympathy. The critics noted the strength of the picture, though some lamented the lack of colour<sup>13</sup> (something he may have decided to correct in the replica, with its stronger shades), and even called it “*dirty*”<sup>14</sup>; but his aim may well have been to paint the young weaver without the strident colours characteristic of the painting of the time in order to achieve a more realistic

Mechanized loom.



**15** CAJAL, Federico, “Bellas Artes”, *La Ilustración. Revista Hispano-Americana*, año 6, nº 242, Barcelona, 21-6-1885, p. 387.

**16** Weaving was mechanized in Catalonia in the 1870s. See NADAL, Jordi, “La formació de la indústria moderna”, in *Catalunya, la fàbrica...*, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

**17** In the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the textile industry used *jennies*, manual machines which were adapted and improved in Catalonia under the name of *bergadana* (named after their inventor, a carpenter from Berga, Ramon Farguell). Nevertheless, with the appearance of the mechanical loom they soon fell into disuse.

**18** NADAL, Jordi, “La formació de la indústria moderna”, in *Catalunya, la fàbrica...*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

effect. The only entirely negative criticism came from Federico Cajal in *La Ilustración*<sup>15</sup> who complained of the lack of light, air and space which a factory (in theory at least) was supposed to have, although of course in practice these three elements tended to be conspicuous by their absence. The painter wanted to depict this reality as it was – a dirty, hungry girl, dressed in rags, working practically in the dark – and used a dramatic *chiaroscuro* to situate the foreman in the background, supervising her work. Resigned and in a world of her own, the young subject works like an automaton weaving on a flying shuttle<sup>16</sup> (a task entrusted to children) in front of an automatic loom<sup>17</sup>. He takes a little artistic licence – for example, the reproduction of the working parts of the machines is not entirely faithful<sup>18</sup> and the girl would have had her hair tied up in a scarf. He is also careful to make the loom an important element of the composition – in fact, it occupies more space than the human subject – a monstrous though beautiful prolongation of the girl, creating the fine fabric which will later go on sale. It is this combination of beauty and horror, the human and the machine, that arouses the observer’s fascination and sympathy.

Juan Planella y Rodríguez. *Incidente de una huelga* (Incident in a strike) c. 1889.  
Oil on canvas. Private collection.





Eduardo Chicharro y Agüera.  
*Tejedora de los Abruzzos*, c. 1910.  
 Oil on canvas. Caja Segovia  
 Foundation.

<sup>19</sup> The frame is not preserved. We thank Marta Naveira of Setdart for allowing us to study the original version of the painting in its current state.

<sup>20</sup> QUILEZ, Francesc M., “Ramon Martí Alsina, entre la inercia romántica y la pulsión realista. Lecturas interpretativas para un escenario pictórico ecléctico”, *Locus Amoenus*, nº 11, 2011-2012, p. 237.

<sup>21</sup> Another painting about this subject is *Tejedora de los Abruzzos* (c. 1910) (Fundación Caja Segovia) by Eduardo Chicharro, although it dates from slightly later and lacks the force of Planella’s work.

The only addition that Planella makes is the quotation from the Bible that appears on the original frame<sup>19</sup>: “*Y dijo Dios: ‘Ganarás el pan con el sudor de tu rostro’* (And God said: “you will earn your bread by the sweat of your brow”). This quotation seems to reveal the depth of the painter’s religious feeling. Considering work as a calling from God and a way to redemption, the theme of the painting may be the cultivation of Christian piety. Some painters used a realistic style indebted to the Baroque, presenting workers as the saints of the new times<sup>20</sup>. In Planella, these references are limited to the treatment of the girl, whose figure seems to illuminate her vile surroundings. His position seems to be paternalist and protective; in fact he often painted children at work, as in *La vendimia* (The Harvest, 1881) and in *Incidente de una huelga* (Incident in a strike, 1889), again in a textile context, though without achieving the sobriety and intensity that he attained here.

The depiction we find in *La niña obrera* is exceptional; although the textile industry was a major element of society in late nineteenth-century Catalonia and elsewhere, it was not a theme that appeared often in paintings. Once again, the reason is to be found in the reality of the times, and even France remained a principally agricultural country. Painters of the Realist school represented washerwomen and seamstresses, that is, female workers involved peripherally in the textile world, but did not include the mechanized element we see in *La niña obrera*<sup>21</sup>. ●

# The unknown side of Kima Guitart

by ASSUMPTA DANGLA  
Photographs: © KIMA GUITART

Watching Kima Guitart paint, we see how she breathes life into silks of the finest quality, how she bathes them in the Mediterranean and how she brings together her experiences of exotic countries and Eastern philosophy to create her beautiful calligraphies. Her brush slides gracefully over the silk as if it were canvas; the aniline dyes are skilfully mixed together on the silk stretched out on a frame where she sketches her compositions of such harmony and energy.

Kima, textile artist and designer, welcomes us to her workshop. The sunlight gives life to her hand-dyed silks, which are either unique creations or designs for screen printing. With this vibrant light that gives meaning to her work, her silks possess an aesthetic beauty worthy of a work of art.

Kima Guitart.



Trained at the School of Arts and Crafts of Barcelona, Kima expanded her horizons by studying at design schools in Florence, Paris and New York. Her desire for exploration then took her to Algeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Ivory Coast in Africa, and to Kyoto in Japan.

A pioneer in Spain in the technique of painting on silk, Kima's work is eclectic and ranges over several creative fields including murals, dress, and accessories. She also carries out commissions for institutions and firms. Her creations have been displayed at individual and collective exhibitions in art galleries in Spain, Europe, the US and Japan, and she has also exhibited in fashion shows in Barcelona, Madrid, Berlin, Cambridge and San Francisco.



Kima Guitart's work reveals a profound understanding of the history of art, and also of the countries she has visited and the cultures she has encountered. At the same time, she has managed to remain faithful to her Mediterranean roots. Her creations reflect a wish to modernize the tradition and also a clear commitment to avant-garde art.

But inside the career of this internationally acknowledged textile artist and designer there is a part that is still relatively unknown. In this article we describe a selection of her works which she donated to the Premià de Mar Printing Museum in 2013.

### **The discovery of the Mediterranean**

Kima's love for the Mediterranean has engendered a brilliant, warm and subtle set of creations. In 1995, as the Catalan capital opened itself out to the sea, she brought out the *foulard* called *Barcelona*. With a large blue circle in the centre, and wide bands of less intense blues, the scarf has a vertical line running down the middle, and winding lines at the sides. The black lines, spots, and abstract plant forms bring the composition together, giving it the sensation of growth and integration that characterizes one of the world's most cosmopolitan cities.

In 1996 she created the scarf *Ciudadella*, which evokes the summer nights of Minorca. Like a canvas, the silk is covered in strokes of an intense dark blue, with avant-garde abstract shapes and touches reminiscent of Miró. The winding forms recall the waves of the sea in constant movement. Kima reencounters the Mediterranean, and listens to it: the lightness of the *georgette* of silks reaches us like a wave, a subtle breeze.

Scarf: *Barcelona*. Natural silk *crêpe de Chine*, screen-printed (2005).



Shawl: *Ciudadella*. Natural silk *crêpe georgette*, screen-printed (1996).



Foulard: *Barcino* (2004).

Kima returned to the theme of Barcelona with the *foulard Barcino*, in 2004, inspired by the commemorative scarves from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Barcino* presents a contemporary view of the city.

The work of Antoni Gaudí takes pride of place: Kima chooses the buildings of the Pedrera, the Sagrada Família and the Park Güell as the unmistakable symbols of the city. Inscribed inside frames, these *modernista* monuments live alongside the market of the Born, the symbol of trade, the column of Christopher Columbus, the symbol of the city's opening to the sea, and the twin towers of the new Olympic city on the Mediterranean. Kima avoids more official monuments and places the spotlight on the modernity inherited from the end of the nineteenth century. And, as on a chess board, she alternates urban landscapes with beautiful calligraphies that repeat the name of the city in a genuinely dynamic composition.

A word is also one of the main elements in the tie *Catalunya (Catalonia)*. While working on the design of the tie, Kima searched for the word *Catalunya* in historical documents and found the original calligraphy, which she repeats throughout the composition. The result is a web of energetic, rhythmic traces, which responds to the needs of modern fashion and creates a dynamic complement for this classic men's accessory.

### Travel and the cosmos

Kima's research extends beyond archives. During her travels she constantly notes down what she sees, and uses these records to transmit her impressions of landscapes, atmospheres, colours, and even smells. The [Delhi scarf](#), with sixteen squares that recall the stalls in the spice market in the old city, uses these warm colours to evoke the variety and the aromas of this wonderful site.

Fans for the Forum of Cultures, collection *Continents*. Screen printed cotton and plane tree wood (2004).





Scarf: *Constel·lacions*. Natural silk crêpe de Chine, screen-printed (2007).

A tireless traveller, Kima expressed the experiences of her voyages in the collection of fans designed for the Forum of Cultures held in Barcelona in 2004. She decided to work with primitive symbols, but added more personal colours; in the fan representing Europe she screen printed the lamb with seven eyes and the Catalan Romanesque cross, for Asia she reproduced the eyes of the Buddha, and for Latin America she incorporated the gaze of lizards found on a fabric from Peru. For Africa, Oceania and North America she chose the symbols of the Senufo people of the Ivory Coast, drawings from Aboriginal art in Australia, and pictographs of the Indians of Dakota. On this occasion, she uses screen printed cotton and wood from plane trees.

Her research into new areas continues apace. Kima is particularly interested in the world of quantum physics. Her work *Constellations* depicts a heavenly body in the centre, with magmatic forms on either side accentuating its depth and size and moving in orbit around it. Throughout the process of creation, from the selection of the materials until the printing and packaging, every detail is treated with immense care, making it both a luxury article and a work of art.



*Foulard: Onades i vistes,*  
for the Port of Barcelona.  
Polyester *crêpe de Chine*  
screen printed by hand (2001).

## A new challenge

Kima has a new challenge ahead of her: creating business gifts. Here, the freedom of the creator is limited by the need to respond to the values of a brand, an established corporate image. The artist must adapt to the customer's requirements without renouncing her own idiosyncratic style. Creating something that is distinctive and personal is no easy task.

Since 1987, Kima has made exclusive designs and product for businesses and public entities such as TV3 (the Catalan television company), the Barcelona Port Authority, the *Generalitat* (the Catalan parliament), Futbol Club Barcelona, Gas Natural, Aldeasa, the Community of Madrid, the Spanish Ministry of Culture, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ifema, Adif and Unión Fenosa.

The donation given to the Print Museum includes works from the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2001 Kima created *Onades i vistes* (*Waves and views*), a *foulard* designed for the Barcelona Port Authority. The scarf alternates images of waves with scenes from the port. Kima transmits the beauty and solidity of the huge cranes; the silhouettes of the rowboats give the composition its symmetry, and the new undulating structures of the *Maremàgnum* evoke the waves of the ocean. In the same year she brought out *Vista aerea* (*Aerial view*), a tie collection which she reproduces the port with synthetic and solid forms for the man of today.

Torera: *Jardins*. Natural silk crêpe de Chine, screen-printed (2003).





*Foulard: IV Centenario, for the Cervantes Institute. Polyester georgette, screen printed by hand (2004).*

Kima has a special skill in adapting to the message that the customer wants to transmit. For the Instituto Cervantes she chose some passages from *Don Quijote*, which she recreates with a rhythmical calligraphy, imitating the trace of the plume with variations of the writing in Chinese ink. The presentation of the scarf is exquisite; the scarf is placed inside a parchment bearing the first sentences of *Don Quijote*, tied with a red lace and packed in cardboard to protect it during shipment. Kima pays attention to the smallest detail.

The classical tradition is also very much alive in her work. Her creation for the Presidency of the Catalan parliament depicts the [gargoyles of the Generalitat Palace](#). The stone colours combine with the lightness of the georgette of screen-printed silk *à la lyonnaise*, and give the scarf its classical, elegant touch. The presence of the gargoyles, references to the art of the early years of the *Generalitat*, evokes the history of the institution which stretches back centuries.

For the [Generalitat](#) Kima also created another scarf with a great visual impact. She reinterprets the *senyera*, the Catalan flag, in black and white stripes, and above it repeats the word *Catalunya*. With its colour and energy the work recalls the sgraffiti of Antoni Tàpies. This versatile composition creates a *foulard* full of elegance in which the motifs are constantly changing and produce a striking visual effect covering the wearer's shoulders or neck.



Fans: *Cal·ligrafies*, for the Spanish Ministry of Culture. Natural silk *crêpe de Chine*, digital printing (2008).

The written word has acquired centre stage in Kima's work – so much so that it forms part of the title of the fans *Calligraphies*, designed for the Spanish Ministry of Culture. For this new challenge she chooses an intense red for the background. Across the backing of the fan is the word *Cultura*, printed in black, a colour that is omnipresent in her work. In the second version of this piece she adds the address of the Ministry's website, and some of its activities. She chooses red, the colour of Spain, with writing in black. In 1989 she was involved in a technical research project with Spanish master fanmakers, in order to produce a beautiful, functional creation with the backing in printed silk and the ribs made of waxed pear tree wood.

Her commitment to literature and culture is stressed in her *Biblioteca en guerra (Library at war)* commissioned by the Spanish National Library in 2005. Again she draws on her vast knowledge of the iconography of antique scarves, and reinvents the commemorative scarf with a photograph of soldiers storing the books belonging to the Library. On top of the photograph Kima adds a grid of black lines, a symbol of repression. Kima revives the memory of those anonymous heroes and their brave attempts to safeguard the country's bibliographical heritage.

Kima's responses to all these challenges reveal a real artistic sensitivity. She captures the essence of tradition and modernity, reinterpreting classical models and expressing an avant-garde spirit imbued with timeless elegance.

- 1 GIRALT MIRACLE, Daniel. *Geometries. Sedes pintades. Catàleg de l'exposició a Artesania Catalunya*. Barcelona, 2009.
- 2 CALVO SERRALLER, Francisco. *La ruta de la seda*.

## Art and presence

The donation to the Print Museum also includes three garments: a jacket, a kimono and a *torera* made out of *foulards*, which Kima created when she moved to her new house with a newly planted garden. The *foulards*, made with an unbroken line of rapid circles and traced in the black that characterizes her work, take on a life of their own, not as accessories but as garments in their own right.

Unencumbered by the dictates of fashion, Kima has been able to create an enduring style for women of energy and vitality. Ever since her early days Kima has remained faithful to her artistic ethos and has converted silks into portable works of art, always changing, in which the brush strokes and the gesture are in perpetual motion. Her patterns steer clear of the conventional; her creations cover and discover interior beauty, and become part in the lives of the women who wear them. Daniel Giralt-Miracle<sup>1</sup> stresses the importance of the process of construction, de-construction and, finally reconstruction of her pieces, while Francisco Calvo Serraller<sup>2</sup> praises her ability to grant a dreamlike quality to these muses of the everyday.

The ever-changing forms that Kima works with emerge as small edifices sustained by contemporary, often anonymous heroines. She likes to refer to them as *dones guapes – beautiful women*. In her fashion shows, *real* women walk the catwalk – artists, homemakers, designers, ... women with a feeling of their own and a genuine presence. The shows radiate enjoyment, spontaneity, and solidarity.

So, Kima, thank you for your generosity, for giving us a taste of your art and for adding new colours, new textures and even new aromas to our collection. ●

# The Triste Textile Workshop: the recovery of the textile heritage of Upper Aragon

by SÍLVIA CARBONELL BASTÉ and SÍLVIA SALADRIGAS CHENG

Marie Noelle Vacher, French by birth and Aragonese by adoption, lived in Madrid between 1960 and 1963, and then moved to Barcelona for professional reasons. In 1978, after a long period of hard work which eventually affected her health, Marie Noelle decided to settle in Triste, a small town in the Pyrenees, with her husband Pepe Granados. The change was originally intended to be temporary, but in the end it grew into a new project which has developed far beyond their expectations.

Without any previous experience in textile production, worked tirelessly to open their first textile workshop in 1982. They were later joined by the weavers Montse Vicente and Isabel Madrigal. The Triste Textile Workshop grew as it incorporated new looms which Pepe built by hand, and so began its modest production of handicraft.

Years later, by chance, Marie Noelle and Pepe came across an abandoned Aragonese draw-loom which is now preserved in the Museum of Sabiñánigo. They decided to put the old loom to work and started a project to revive the textile crafts of the area. Going from village to village and from house to house they found old pieces – quilts, rugs, tapestries, and recovered numerous traditional designs.

In Spanish the draw-loom is called *telar de tiro*, or also *telar de lazos* – *lazos* being the loops through which the thread is drawn to make different patterns. This type of loom was brought to Spain by the Muslim weavers who used silk to make their magnificent pieces. In Aragon the draw-loom was adapted to work with wool, flax and hemp, fibres more characteristic of the Pyrenean area.

Eventually, with time and patience, Marie Noelle and Pepe managed to rebuild one of these looms. As no weavers were still active, Marie Noelle had to experiment time and again with the arrangement of the warp and wefts until they found the right way to mount the loom and weave on it.



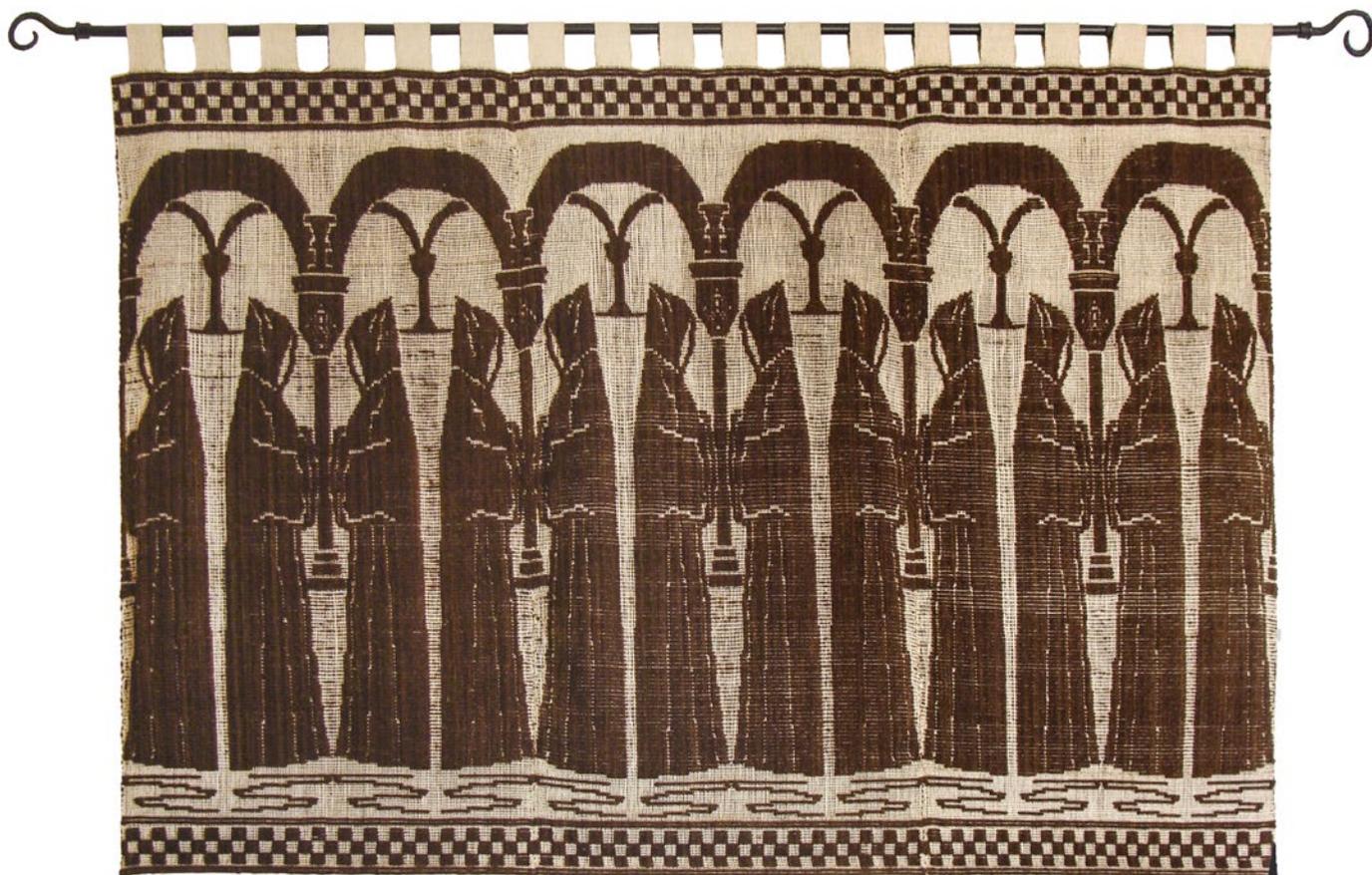






Today, in addition to this loom, their workshop also has a countermarch loom for damasks, a conventional heddle loom and a wide flying shuttle loom, used for quilts and large pieces. Their philosophy is to recover indigenous natural fibres: hemp, flax and wool, to make all kinds of household furnishings and personal use. Shawls, scarves, rugs, tablecloths, bags, jackets, wall hangings or quilts of Biescas are their main products, as well as special fabrics made to order for both public and private institutions.





Apart from traditional fabrics, one of their main interests was the recovery of **natural dyes used** in the area in former times. Behind the workshop Marie Noelle has what she calls her own “**botanical garden**” with plants and trees grown for this purpose. She grows weld, sumac, madder, walnut, ferns and berries, and also pastel grass (of which Marie Noelle is particularly proud) to obtain the much coveted shades of blue.



Cochineal, lichens and fungi dyes are other dyestuffs Marie Noelle uses in her work. In 2008 she created the Mycological Association of Spain, of which she is president, which carries out research into the dyes obtained from these organisms. The Association has now published a CD with over 130 dye samples.

From the very beginning, the Association has been determined to pass on its knowledge to others. At the “Triste Textile Workshop”, courses are taught in spinning, carding and dyeing of animal and vegetable fibres and weaving. The teaching activity also extends to schools in the area, where Marie Noelle regularly gives courses.

The efforts of Marie Noelle and the workshop have been recognized with invitations to numerous meetings and conferences both in Spain and abroad. Her fabrics have been displayed at the Aragon Craft Centre, Textile Museum and Documentation Centre in Terrassa and at the Monastery of San Juan de la Peña.



To maintain and preserve this exceptional heritage, Marie Noelle has reached an agreement with the Town Hall of Peñas de Riglos to set up a museum. It will be built next to the present workshop and will be managed by the Triste Residents' Association.

Currently the workshop can be visited by appointment and for a nominal fee. A guided tour by Marie Noelle introduces visitors to the painstaking process of producing these unique pieces. ●

[www.tallertextiltriste.com](http://www.tallertextiltriste.com)

# Simplification as the norm: a common ground for Chanel and Balenciaga

by Ana Balda

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Cristobal Balenciaga gave a brief interview to *The Times* in 1971<sup>1</sup>. In his declarations, he stated that he especially admired the work of Vionnet, Coco Chanel and Louiseboulanger. He expressed his admiration for Coco Chanel in the following terms: “she took all the chi-chi and fuss out of women’s clothes”.

This article explains which aspects of Balenciaga’s work embody Chanel’s principle of simplification and in what respects Balenciaga’s fashion is deeply *chanelien*. It also analyses the difference between the contributions of Balenciaga and Chanel, even though they shared a common conceptual territory.

1 BALENCIAGA Cristóbal interviewed by GLYNN Prudence, “Balenciaga and la vie d’un chien”, *The Times*, 3-8-1971, p. 6.

2 *La Voz de Guipuzcoa*, 24-09-1917. (ARZALLUZ Miren, *Cristóbal Balenciaga. La forja del maestro*, Nerea, San Sebastián, 2010, p. 118).

3 MADSEN Axel, *Coco Chanel*, Circe, Barcelona, 1988, p. 346.

4 CHANEL Coco in an interview with BRADY James W., *WWD*, 2-7-1963. SPRAGUE Laurie, *WWD. 100 Years. 100 Designers*, Fairchild Books, New York, 2011, p. 266.

5 BALENCIAGA Cristóbal interviewed by GLYNN Prudence, “Balenciaga and la vie d’un chien”, *The Times*, 3-8-1971, p. 6.

Cristobal Balenciaga witnessed first-hand the fashion changes driven by Coco Chanel. His own beginnings as an apprentice tailor in San Sebastian date from the time when Chanel began to design her hats in Royallieu, and his first trips to Paris as head of the couture department of *Les Grands Magasins du Louvre* coincided from the first references to Coco Chanel in the fashion press. In addition, Queen Victoria Eugenia was a client of Chanel’s in Biarritz, and a major fashion icon at that time in Spain. Balenciaga had the opportunity to see the changes Chanel had introduced by seeing the queen and the women who followed her style in San Sebastian. He was also able to admire the innovations Chanel had introduced in the exhibition of her designs held at the Hotel Maria Cristina of San Sebastian in September 1917<sup>2</sup>.

There is no record about when they met for the first time; numerous testimonies indicate that they shared a long relationship throughout their careers, although it suffered some ups and downs<sup>3</sup>. In any case, they professed admiration for each other’s professional ability, and had no hesitation in confessing this mutual respect publicly. While Chanel referred to Balenciaga as “the only one I admire”<sup>4</sup>, Balenciaga stressed the revolution in women’s dress that had been introduced by Chanel’s innovations: “She took all the chi-chi and fuss out of women’s clothes”, he declared to *The Times* in 1971<sup>5</sup>.

Maroon coat made of tafeta wool and mohair by Balenciaga (1960). The seam which crosses the back of the coat, joining the armhole of the sleeves, becomes the hallmark of this piece. Reg. n° 2006.39. © Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa.



6 MADSEN Axel..., p. 311.

7 Cfr. DE LA HAYE Amy, *Chanel*, Nerea, San Sebastián, 2013, pp. 38-41.

8 FLOCH Jean-Marie, "El total look de Coco Chanel", *Revista de Occidente*, nº 366, Madrid, 2011, p. 194.

9 MADSEN Axel..., p. 96.

This idea of elimination is the basis of the influence Chanel had on Balenciaga's work. In Chanel's styles, he saw that elimination was the key to true elegance. Balenciaga's character and his humble upbringing contributed to the sobriety of his designs, but the fashions Chanel launched at the beginning of the 1910s had a profound influence on the formation of his own aesthetic. Few designers of French Couture could capture and translate this principle of simplification as well as Balenciaga did, and in fact it could be said that Balenciaga inherited his vision of fashion from Chanel. Some fashion experts, such as Madsen, defined Balenciaga's designs, especially his evening designs, as too formalistic in the sense that they had excessive volume or sculptural presence<sup>6</sup>. But even in this area, in which Balenciaga is at his most visual, he cannot be classified as a Baroque designer, in the same way as Chanel's evening dresses launched in the twenties, lavishly decorated in rhinestones and inspired by the iconography of the Russian ballets of Diaghilev<sup>7</sup>, were not Baroque. "These masses," Jean-Marie Floch analyses, "are still clearly defined areas, which in no way call into question the classic silhouette of the general system"<sup>8</sup>. The aesthetic of both designers was based mainly on simplicity and purity of lines: the ornament was a secondary concept, an addition that was balanced only by the use of large pieces of fabric that harmonized embroidery and jewellery.

This obsession with linearity and isolated forms are characteristic of the classical perspective in the world of art and it is no surprise that both creators are considered great classics of twentieth-century fashion. The most important difference between them lies in their craftsmanship. While Chanel had learned to sew in her youth, she was not able to finish a garment with her own hands (a lack that her own employees criticized<sup>9</sup>), and worked around this limitation by adding subtle details like trimmings or additions to identify her style, such as pearls. Balenciaga, on the other hand, felt from the beginning that much of the beauty of a dress lay in its perfect finishing.

Moreover, Chanel did not produce fashion in order to enhance the physical attributes of women, something that the exaggerated S line of the nineteenth century had done. For Chanel, this S line design meant that women would inescapably be seen as objects, an idea that clashed with her own free spirit. Therefore, the lack of curves and the low waists of her dresses, the use of sober colours in contrast to the pastel shades of Worth or Doucet and the *fauvians* of Poiret implied an equalization of the female aesthetic to the masculine one. In this process, Chanel tried to project a more intellectual, more independent woman – one that was freer and less of an object. Just as the anonymity of masculine attire is conceived for the world of work and social relations and

**10** BARTHES Roland, *El sistema de la moda y otros escritos*, Paidós Comunicación 135, Barcelona, 2003, p. 422.

**11** CERRILLO RUBIO Lourdes, *La moda moderna. Génesis de un arte nuevo*, Siruela, Madrid, 2010, p. 129.

**12** HOLLANDER Anne, *Seeing through clothes*, University of California Press, London, 1993, p. 385.

**13** For more information about the Chanel years in Switzerland, see MADSEN Axel..., pp. 269-312.

**14** "Here was the triumph of simplicity". SNOW Carmel, *New York Journal American*, 28-02-1953. (GOLBIN Pamela, *Balenciaga Paris*, Thames&Hudson, London, 2006, p. 91).

**15** MILLER Lesley Ellis, *Balenciaga*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2007, p. 30.

gives its wearer an air of distinction, Chanel's revolutionary early designs from the 1910s epitomize this idea which had been reserved for the male domain and implies "a certain neglect of the body, which one could say was completely sheltered, absorbed in the social distinction of dress"<sup>10</sup>.

The *Little Black Dress*, launched by Chanel in 1926, brought together these two concepts of the intellectual and the democratic fashion in a model that made any woman distinguished. "(It) gave women a dress suitable for any occasion, easy to copy and very versatile"<sup>11</sup> says Lourdes Cerrillo. With the *Little Black Dress*, female sensuality is blurred to give way to an ideal of beauty in which attractiveness goes beyond a woman's physical characteristics. With this innovation, Chanel also anticipated the new social atmosphere that would arrive with the crash of 1929. After the happy years of the Charleston and the showy fashions of the Roaring Twenties, Chanel's black dress announced a more sober and modest style, inspired in the aesthetics of maids and clerks, which in the following years would come to be considered as revolutionary and as new as the bright dresses of the previous decade<sup>12</sup>.

In the 1930s the success in Paris of Italian designer Elsa Schiaparelli, with her baroque decorations, exaggerated shoulders and surrealist touches, accentuated the identification of the Chanel aesthetic with simplicity. The outbreak of World War II and Chanel's affair with a German officer kept her<sup>13</sup> away from the fashion circuit for fifteen years. Throughout that time Balenciaga emerged as the designer who best embodied this idea of elimination as the key to true elegance. The fashion press recognized this significant feature of Balenciaga fashion after his arrival in Paris, and mentioned it on numerous occasions. Carmel Snow, editor in chief of Harper's Bazaar at the time, stressed this idea after the presentation of Balenciaga's successful summer collection in 1953: "it is the triumph of simplicity"<sup>14</sup>, she exclaimed.

In fact the first collection of the Basque fashion designer in Paris, presented in August 1937, had included a special display of black dresses, a concept that Chanel had introduced a decade earlier and was still considered a safe trend among the fashionable clients of *Haute Couture*. In all his subsequent collections, Balenciaga included at least one *Little Black Dress* whose distinctiveness lay in its craftsmanship<sup>15</sup> and its finish, which he performed with his own hands. Through the presentation of these special black dresses, the designer wanted to symbolize the synthesis of technical excellence and beauty.

In addition, Balenciaga cultivated this *chanelian* concept of simplification to create his own style. He focused his work on achieving volumes and unusual silhouettes, through the elimination of seams, or turning the ones he considered necessary into signs of distinction. While simplicity in Chanel,

Black sack dress by Balenciaga (1957). It has a trapezoidal shape constructed with both pleats made from the hip, one to the height of the bust and the other to the armhole. Reg. n° 2000. 194. © Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa.





Queen Victoria Eugenia wearing a total look Chanel in San Sebastián, summer of 1928. © Fototeka Kutxa

16 LIPOVETSKY Gilles, *El imperio de lo efímero*, Anagrama, Madrid, 2010, p. 82.

as in menswear, distinguished the wearer through subtle details – generally accessories like pearls, or black and white shoes – Balenciaga drew the distinction of his more genuine creations from a minimalist silhouette, which he perfected in the late 1960s when he achieved the maximum level of simplification.

In their pursuit of elegance through elimination, both Chanel and Balenciaga transformed the aesthetic canon of female beauty based on the prominence of the bust and waist. The changes they introduced in the morphology of fashion uprooted the concept of feminine beauty linked to a perfect body, and became an ideal that would fit all types of women. Gilles Lipovetsky links the brand of Chanel with the democratization of fashion<sup>16</sup>, but this idea should be nuanced by explaining that she democratized fashion not only in economic terms, but by giving access to the world of elegance to female bodies of all kinds. The streamlined dresses she created lengthened the women's silhouette of the twenties and made them look taller and slimmer. Queen Victoria Eugenia herself offers a clear example of this Chanel look.

When Dior launched his *New Look* in February 1947, with tiny waistlines and huge amounts of fabric, Balenciaga presented his new Barrel Silhouette – almost the exact opposite of Dior's concept. This decision of Balenciaga's bears witness to his *chanelian* concept of fashion: while Christian Dior's "Flower Girl" represented a return to the Worth style of Empress Eugenia, with his tiny waistlines and voluminous skirts, Balenciaga designed jackets with backs

constructed in whole pieces that hid the waist and matched them with straight skirts. Dior's woman highlighted the bust and the waist as female core values, Balenciaga's concealed them and toned down this explicitly sexual role. Just as Chanel had fled from the straitjacket of the styles of the *Belle Epoque*, Balenciaga decided to dissociate his designs from the fashion of the *New Look* and to design patterns that offered women greater freedom of movement.

In conclusion, both Chanel and Balenciaga (inspired by her), simplified the fashion of their contemporaries. They both developed their own personal style but at the same time they shared the principle of elimination, and in doing so they abstracted the possible physical imperfections of women and transformed their bodies into an ideal. They placed their creation outside the standards of beauty of their time and thus became influential fashion classics of the twentieth century. ●

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# Library novelties and news

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## **INDIANES, 1736-1847.** **The origins of industry in Barcelona** **Àlex Sánchez (curator)**

Ed. MUHBA, Barcelona History Museum. Edicions de la Central, Barcelona, 2013. ISBN 978-84-940813-4-7

Issue nº 28 of *Datatèxtil* included an article by Àlex Sánchez on the temporary exhibition at the Barcelona History Museum entitled *Indianes, 1736-1847. The origins of Industrial Barcelona*, from 19 May until 16 December 2012. In 2013, the magnificent catalogue of the exhibition was published. This 178-page book is beautifully presented, with a plethora of illustrations and articles for non-specialists. The publication bears witness to the importance of the period of industrialization in Catalonia, which was based above all on the manufacture of *indianes* (as these printed calicoes were known) in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth.

Àlex Sánchez, Professor of Economic History and Institutions at the University of Barcelona and curator of the exhibition, is the author of most of the texts in the book. After a foreword by the Mayor of Barcelona Xavier Trias, the book begins with an introduction by Sánchez to the subject of the *indianes* “calicoes” and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in Barcelona. This is followed by the texts of the exhibition, with magnificent illustrations of the exhibits. The beauty of the cloths and the garments give a very clear idea of the textile fashions of eighteenth-century Barcelona. Sánchez explains how this major craft and mercantile tradition was the starting-point for the development of one of Europe’s major manufacturing cities.

However, besides the descriptions of the factories and their activity, the Eastern origins of the printed cloth and of the beginnings of their production in Barcelona, one of the most interesting features of both the book and the exhibition are the charts and the statistics taken



from recent publications which give the reader a very clear idea of the impact on the city of the calico industry. The exhibition also explores on the technical aspects, the production process, the new ways of organizing the work, and the use of looms and the early machines. Sánchez explains convincingly how this period set the scene for the development of industrial modernization and provided strong support for technical and organizational change that made Barcelona one of Europe’s industrial centres.

The book, like the exhibition, focuses on the growth of calico printing in Barcelona, the city’s evolution as an industrial and commercial centre, and the repercussions that the new industrial context had for its urban development. Special attention is paid to the effect on the city’s expansion alongside the rapid growth of the calico printing industry and textile production. Industrialization brought problems of sanitation and led to the decision to demolish the city walls; calico production moved to new districts, known as the *prats d’indianes* “calicoes”.

Given the intrinsic interest of the subject matter, perhaps there are some aspects that could have been explored in more depth. We might have liked a fuller explanation of the historical context, especially in the early stages of the process, as it seems to be a paradox that the Barcelona which emerged from the defeat of 1714 and was so heavily

punished by the victors, should have been able to establish itself as Spain's most powerful industrial and commercial centre. There could have been more on the relations between the entrepreneurs and political power in Madrid, and the role of the Board of Trade of Barcelona and its schools. But of course in a single book and a single exhibition there is not room for everything.

Àlex Sánchez closes his account with an intriguing reflection: the wars of the end of the eighteenth century and the crisis of the *Ancien Régime* halted the process of industrialization, but the strong reaction that followed paved the way for the modernization of the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. For the author, the slogan "*El nostre enginy, el nostre cor, la nostra llançadora*", (literally, *Our genius, our heart, our shuttle loom*) reflects the Catalans' creativity and receptiveness to innovation. To an extent, it evokes the myth created by Castilians regarding the

Catalans' work ethic – something which Sánchez's master Josep Fontana has suggested should be analysed in considerably more depth. Nonetheless, Sánchez stresses the key role of innovation.

The second part of the book, in the form of an appendix, is written by Jaume Artigues and Francesc Mas. It describes the buildings that housed the calico printing factories of the eighteenth century, some of which still survive today in the Sant Pere district of Barcelona. After a brief introduction, Artigues and Mas explore in detail the buildings that housed the factories: Canet, Sala-Nadal, Aimar-Ribas, Bonaplata, Juncadella-Escuder, Ribas, Canaleta-Sert, and so on. The ground plans and other illustrations are accompanied by a useful bibliography. These descriptions are particularly interesting from the archaeological point of view, and interested readers may well consider using them as a guide around the Barcelona of the calico printing factories. ■

## Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION &gt; ESPAÑOL

**COLLECTING TEXTILES****Patrons, collections, museums****Fondazione Antonio Ratti /****Umberto Allemandi & C., Turin, 2013**

ISBN: 978-88-422-2234-7

**COLLECTING  
TEXTILES**

Patrons Collections Museums



Allemandi &amp; C.

F/R

In September 2012, the Fondazione Ratti in Como hosted the Congress “Collecting Textiles”, a fascinating meeting of sessions and debates attended by a large group of museum professionals, art lovers, collectors and researchers.

The book under review is the compilation of these sessions, which the Foundation already posted on its website via a video link only a few days after the end of the meeting.

The publication covers the study’s three main themes: “The figure of the collector”, “The identity of a collection: the birth of a museum”, and “Exhibiting textiles”, preceded by a double introduction to the work of Antonio Ratti written by Francina Chiara (Antonio Ratti and his textile collection) and Tom Campbell (The Antonio Ratti Textile Center at the Metropolitan Museum in New York).

Born and educated in Como, Antonio Ratti soon developed a passion for textile design. He began his career with a small tie printing firm, which became the well known Ratti SpA in 1953. His love of textile art led him to sponsor several exhibitions, and to create the Como Foundation in 1985 and the Antonio Ratti Textile Center in 1995. Francina Chiara admiringly traces Ratti’s career, exploring his reasons for collecting textiles and giving a foretaste of the themes of the chapters to come. Ratti’s work emerges as a fascinating combination: his initial desire to cover *everything*; the development of his personal taste; the objective of compiling decorative ideas to be reinterpreted

on an industrial scale; and his sharp business acumen. However, Ratti did not just amass historic textiles and industrial sample books; he classified and catalogued them in his subsequent publications, and finally set up museums where the archives and the wealth of knowledge could be preserved and made available to a wider audience, both in Como and in New York.

Other notable collections are mentioned next: the Jakob Krauth collection, purchased by the German government in 1880 and the embryo of the Deutsches Textilmuseum in Krefeld; the Krishna Riboud collection, which grew into the foundation that bears her name and the Association for the Study of Asian textiles, and is now part of the Musée Guimet; and finally Riccardo Gualino’s art collection, which included a number of textiles and was broken up after the Wall Street crash of 1929. Paola Ruffino sets out

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to reconstruct it by exploring the holdings at the Museo Civico and the Museo d'Arte Orientale in Turin.

The talk by Seth Sigelaub, an active collector of fabrics and textile literature, deserves special mention. Sigelaub posed a number of searching questions about the representativeness of textile pieces, the differences in the ways expensive and more modest textiles are treated, and the numerous gaps that expressions as ambiguous as “ethnographic textiles” or “minor arts” aim to gloss over.

Most of the museums we know today initially grew from private collections. This is the theme explored by experts at the Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, the Museo del Tessuto in Prato, the Textile Museum and Documentation

Centre in Terrassa and the Musée de l'Impression sur Étoffes in Mulhouse. The approaches and focuses (and the personal tastes) of the collectors may differ but between them there are many more similarities than differences.

The book concludes with two texts that are very different from each other, though both centred on the role of fabrics in more generic exhibitions; Magdalena Droste explores how Bauhaus textiles progressed from the shop to the museum halls, and Sonnet Stanfill assesses the place of fabrics in fashion exhibitions over the twentieth century.

This excellent book offers a vast amount of information on European textile heritage and gives us plenty of food for thought on the ambiguous and controversial figure of the textile collector. ■

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION &gt; CATALÀ

## THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL LACE FAIR OF ARENYS DE MAR

25, 26 and 27 April 2014

In April 2012, the First International Lace Fair of Arenys de Mar was held as part of the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Lacemakers. The success of the event encouraged the Arenys de Mar Town Council to repeat the performance, and the Second International Lace Fair will take place on 25, 26 and 27 April this year at the Calisay Cultural Centre, to coincide once again with the Lacemakers' Meeting.

International lace fairs are hosted in several European cities. Probably the best known are **Camariñas**, Galicia, held this year for the 24th time, and Novedrate in Italy, the oldest in Europe. Thanks to their success, other fairs, displays and meetings have been organized to bring the European lacemaking craft to a wider audience and to provide a point of contact above all for people who work with bobbin lace. International fairs are held in Sebourg (France), Peniche (Portugal), Bobowa (Poland), either annually or every other year.

The Arenys de Mar International Fair will welcome lacemakers from France, Hungary, Poland, Russia, the Czech Republic, Portugal, and



Galicia alongside representatives of the leading lacemaking associations and schools in Catalonia. Over the three days, participants will be able to see the work created in different European countries, and to compare the innovations proposed by designers and lacemakers from the Czech Republic and elsewhere in central Europe with the more traditional techniques applied in Portugal and France and to an extent in Catalonia.

This year's International Lace Fair is an excellent opportunity for the lace and textile craft sectors to consolidate the example of other meetings held in Europe. ■

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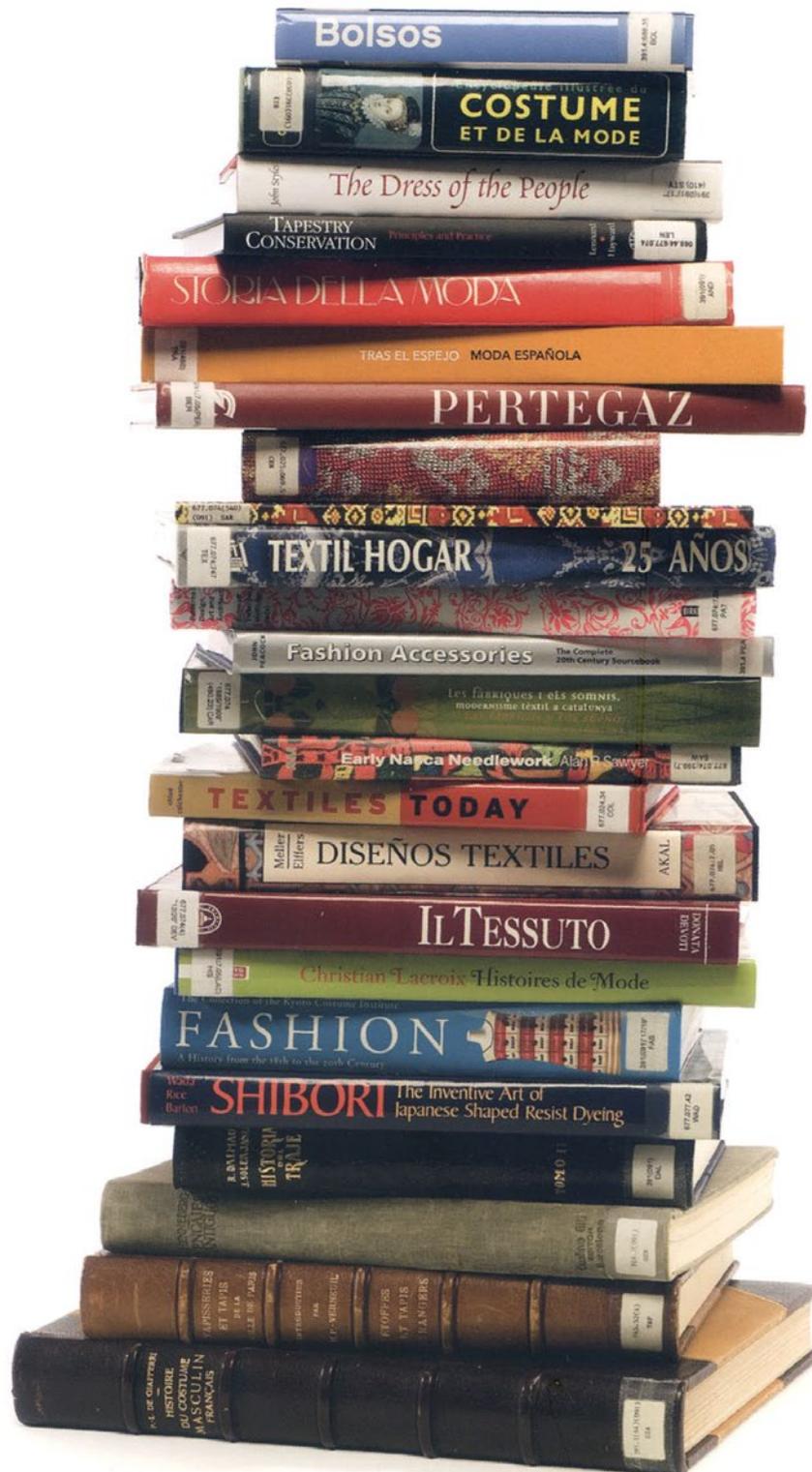
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