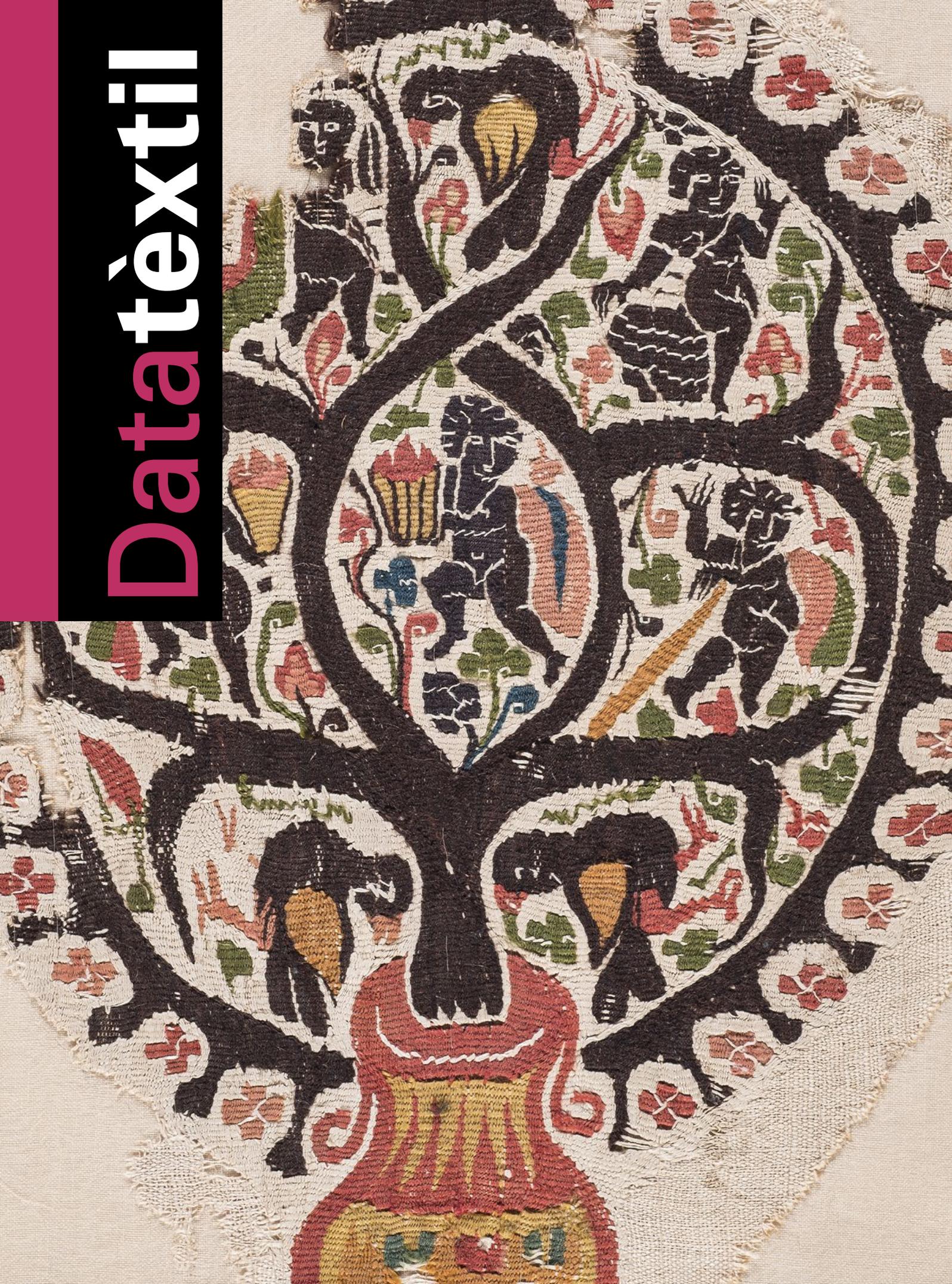


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Distinction, a century of fashion photography: an exhibition charting the history of photography and the fashion system

by Dr. SÍLVIA VENTOSA.

Curator of Textiles and Fashion at the Barcelona Design Museum

The exhibition *Distinction, a century of fashion photography* is the culmination of six years of research into the fashion system carried out by a team from the Barcelona Design Museum, formerly the Textile and Costume Museum of Barcelona. Over the century that the exhibition covers, fashion has been represented not only by clothing and accessories but also through graphic and photographic documents, magazines, publications and a variety of other materials, all of which have contributed to the dissemination of novelties in fashion.

Since the 1960s, the Museum has held a sizeable collection of fashion engravings and illustrations, books including Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il Mondo* (published in 1598, containing descriptions of clothing from across the world), periodicals and magazines from the eighteenth century onwards, and photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 2010, this collection was used as the basis for two exhibitions, *Fashion images* and *Outumuro Looks, twenty years photographing fashion*, which looked at how fashion images are constructed, and led to the curation of a new photographic collection, highlighting the importance and ubiquity of fashion photographs in modern society. The project was overseen by a committee that worked with the Museum team to compile a selection of 490 images representing the output of 38 photographers from the early twentieth century up to the present. The guiding criterion was to select images that showcased outfits for forthcoming seasons and were published in fashion magazines and designer or brand catalogues. In making its selection, the committee considered the outfits themselves, the designers, the media impact of the photographs, their public reception, and in particular the technical and aesthetic quality of the images. It was decided not to include work by photojournalists, reports on fashion shows, outfits on dummies or artistic photographs. The collection, the first of its type and unique in Spain, is a representation of the language of fashion, which emerges from the world of commerce but finds a second life in the cultural universe, converting immaterial and ephemeral images into items of cultural heritage.

Mannequin doll. Leather doll with porcelain head, dressed in silk, satin ribbon and lace. Catalonia, c. 1870. MTIB 103.623. Manuel Rocamora Collection. Barcelona Design Museum. ©Xavi Padrós.



Photography is the main tool through which fashion is disseminated, bringing it to the masses through magazines, television and the Internet; without these channels, the fashion system would be unlikely to survive. So fashion can be defined as a social phenomenon in constant flux, exerting its influence through images to bring about periodic changes in the way we dress and the styles that dominate a particular era. The sociologist Yuniya Kawamura suggests that fashion can be studied as an institutionalized “fashion system”, in which different professionals “engage in activities collectively, share the same belief in fashion, and participate together in producing and perpetuating not only the ideology of fashion but also fashion culture”, acting together to grease the machinery comprising the design, production and mass sale of new models (Kawamura 2005). To showcase its new products, the fashion system necessarily requires channels of diffusion that will drive consumption, transforming the garments created by designers into objects of desire and purchasable commodities.

Centuries ago, new designs were traditionally shown on mannequin dolls. In the fourteenth century, Parisian *couturiers* would send their “French dolls” to the provinces and to the courts of Europe; the mannequin dolls were dressed in the styles of the Court of Versailles and sent to potential customers to secure new orders.

In later periods, the use of engravings, hand-drawn illustrations and photographs greatly increased the reproducibility of fashion images and their circulation among the bourgeoisie. The industrial revolution of the nineteenth century brought with it mass production of textiles, which sold at a dizzying rate. By the mid-nineteenth century, department stores published illustrated catalogues, and these were followed by fashion magazines, whose low cost and ease of transportation made them the first step in the democratization of fashion, alongside engravings – the first form of graphic reproduction on a mass scale. Fashion engravings, whether as standalone images or mounted in magazines, were highly idealized, bearing little relation to the real world.

Illustrations took on a markedly artistic quality in the early twentieth century, as artists such as Xavier Gosé, Paul Iribe, Erté and Georges Lepape adopted an abstract style to depict the spirit of a new modernity, foreshadowing the contemporary approach to fashion photography.

Most recently, cinema, television and Internet – broadcasters of the visual image on a vast scale – have made access to information about the fashion world a universal phenomenon.

The sources of inspiration for fashion designers are increasingly diverse. Trend agencies provide clients with style books for each new season, which draw on themes from society, art and nature. They are presented as large-format albums that offer a particular lifestyle image, transmitted through the choice of garments, colours, patterns and finished pieces. Designers take inspiration from these portrayals when conceiving new collections, drawing also on their own intuition and on ideas the views of people on the street, particular urban tribes, blogs and Instagram, as well as the opinions of forecasters and trendsetters.

Traditionally, designers have unveiled their collections for the new season at fashion shows, where photographers and magazine editors select the most interesting themes and outfits and distribute the images around the world. It is this selection that will become the season's fashion, while thousands of outfits failing to grab the attention of the press and are quickly forgotten. This is far from an objective process; major interests are represented, and the social, economic and even political consequences can be huge.

Once collections have been put together, magazines are the main tool the fashion system has at its disposal to display and disseminate current and future fashion; they do this by transforming ideas, sketches, materials and outfits into new and unique products. Roland Barthes observed that it is not the clothes themselves that create the meaning of fashion, rather the way in which they can be portrayed through iconic and verbal representations,



Manuscrit de la
La Nymphe galante dont le port est majestueux, noble et fier, courait avec tranquillité, au Palais Royal, les hazards auxquels sont ex-
posées les pertouses de son sexe: elle a un bonnet à la Richard, corset rayé, et vêtue d'une robe à la Chinoise, retrouffée.

A Paris chez Ehnauts et Rapilly, rue d' St. Jacques, à la Ville de Constance. Avec Privil. du Roi.



*Tourteau de satin noir ouvert sur intérieur de linon blanc plissé -
Chapeau en peau de soie noire avec garniture blanche.*

Cover of the magazine *El Hogar y la Moda*, 25 September 1936. Documentation Centre, Barcelona Design Museum. ©Xavi Padrós.



governed by their own linguistic rules (Barthes 1967). So while a real garment may be appreciated by only a small circle of people, its iconic and verbal version is enjoyed by a great many more.

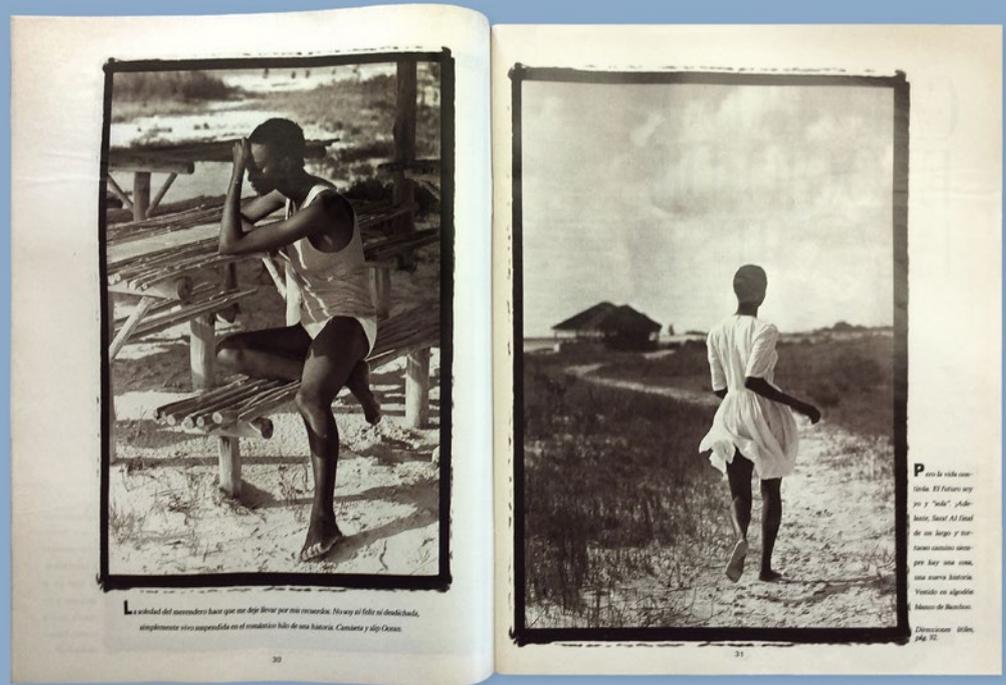
In magazines, these ideas are transmitted in the form of fashion editorials, which generally consist of a series of photographs with an underlying narrative. Most magazines contain four or five full editorials, offered alongside general articles and advertising content. These short pieces create a micro-universe in which the subject, the choice of photograph and styling, the location, the models and the clothes combine to create an atmosphere that compels and seduces, transmitting “what people are wearing” and the “mood of the time” to readers well versed in the codes of fashion.

Editorials implicitly convey the need to continually acquire new designs, using models who project attractiveness, wealth and glamour with which the reader is encouraged to identify. Our urge to imitate incites us to aspire to the beauty and lifestyle of the models, and this psychological projection impels us to consume the products seen in the images.

Susan Sontag argued that photography – the activity of producing and consuming images – was the phenomenon that heralded the advent of modern society. Of all the media in which fashion is represented, photography is the most powerful means of communicating the latest developments (Sontag 1977).

With the advent of photography, photo portraits quickly replaced paintings as the preferred medium for representing the rich and famous. Such images were printed on collectable cards distributed at social gatherings. Although they were not expressly intended to portray fashions, clothes were very much the

Fashion spread with photographs by María Espeus in *La Vanguardia* magazine, July-August 1988.

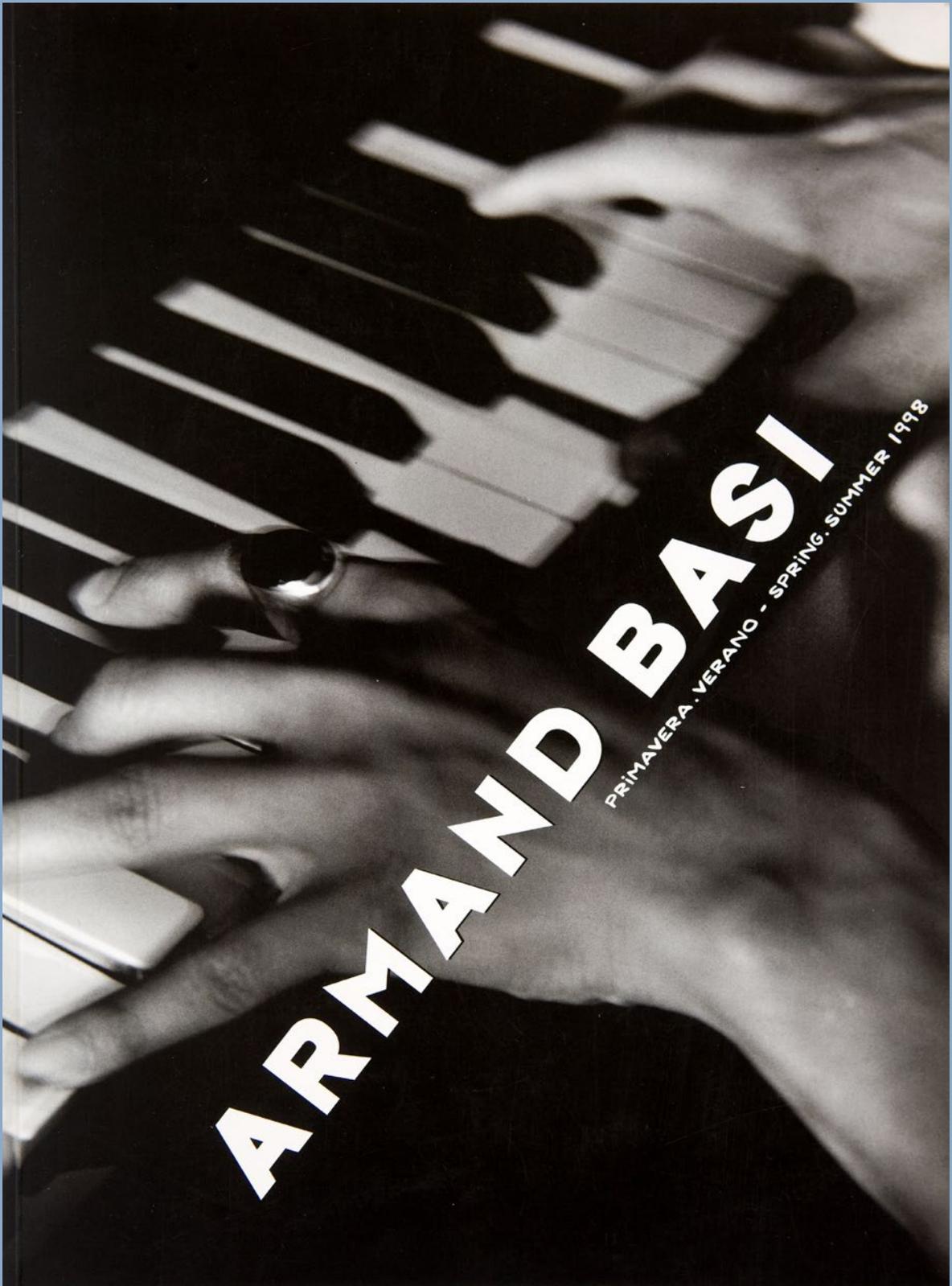


focus, and from 1881, the use of such images to accompany magazine articles was commonplace. In 1909, *Vogue* changed its focus from a society magazine to a channel of information on *haute couture* for a vast potential market – not merely those with the means to buy the outfits it showcased – and marked the birth of the modern conception of fashion as a global phenomenon (Lieberman 1979). Over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the language of fashion has changed, from the opulent gowns and lavish homes of the 1940s and 1950s to representations of urban deprivation in the most provocative contemporary images.

Designers, meanwhile, have traditionally publicised their new collections in printed catalogues, which are being superseded by web pages.

On television and the Internet, fashion channels, sites and blogs generate extensive news and publicity about designers and forthcoming shows, drive sales, and introduce new styles to the public. They are also regularly updated spaces for the exchange of text, photographs and videos. Social media sites such as Pinterest and Instagram provide visual platforms that are accessible to the public and professionals alike, in which the immediacy and broad social impact of the images combine with rapid recycling of content. Some Instagram users tag the clothes they are wearing with the corresponding brand name, giving their followers a guide to where the outfits can be bought and establishing a similar mechanism to that of the photographs published in fashion magazines.

At a time of rapid social change, with questions over the future of traditional fashion images, the Barcelona Design Museum presents its new collection of photographs from the Spanish fashion world in an exhibition that has generated widespread coverage in traditional and social media and attracted a large number of visitors.



Photograph by Ramon Batlles, outfit by El Dique Flotante, published in *Tricornio*, vol. 2, Barcelona, Autumn 1934. MTIB 4.195/14.



The exhibition *Distinction, a century of fashion photography*

According to Joana Bonet, the exhibition *Distinction, a century of fashion photography* is a tour of ‘the skin of the world’, capturing current moods and displaying photographs that have only recently become part of the Museum collection (*Distinción*, season of talks, 2016). The exhibition charts the last hundred years of fashion photography across seven chronologically and thematically ordered areas, building new dialogues between photographer and photograph.

The photographs by Pere Casas Abarca, from the early twentieth century, show women in loose-fitting clothes, announcing the modernity of the 1920s, with its short, low-cut dresses, long trousers and espadrilles, as a new simplicity and popular designs dresses brought fashion closer to the working classes; or the modernity of the 1930s, with its long gowns that speak to the excess and power of the fashion world. It was in this period that the first magazines containing fashion reports and photography began to emerge.

By the 1940s and 1950s, models had become goddesses in fictional worlds, representing an idealised construction of perfection. By contrast, the photographs from the 1960s and 1970s show women in movement, transmitting youthfulness and a new easing of social mores. Fashion editorials in the 1980s began to invite readers to imagine brief fictions in which clothing is present but, in contrast to earlier periods, is not the protagonist. The landscapes constructed in these fictions help to build an atmosphere, transmitting a language and message that readers transfer to their own worlds to achieve (or endeavour to achieve) happiness. By the time the style magazines of the 1990s emerged, fashion was one more facet of “lifestyle”, treated on an equal footing with music, architecture and food.



Photograph by Manuel Outumuro, dress by Josep Font, published in *El País Semanal*, 2005. MTIB 3.675/10, donation by Manuel Outumuro, 2010.

Contemporary fashion photography proposes a series of recurring tropes, particularly gender, ethnicity, interculturality, exotic or surprising journeys, and the mingling of social classes. New and interesting themes are also appearing, such as the age or extreme slenderness of models, skin colour and, most prominently, street style and the new subcultures of the urban youth.

Notable among the photographers represented at the exhibition are the pioneers of the 1920s and 1930s, such as Ramon Batlles or Compal, the *haute couture* photographers Juan Gyenes, Man and Josep Compte, exponents of the new photography of the 1960s and 1970s such as Oriol Maspons, Leopoldo Pomés and Antoni Bernad, and the group of photographers active since the 1980s, who include José Manuel Ferrater, Manel Esclusa, Sergi Pons, Biel Capllonch, Daniel Riera, Pep Àvila, Txema Yeste, Manuel Outumuro and Eugenio Recuenco, as well as the younger generation of César Segarra, [Sergi Jasanada](#) and Xevi Muntané (*Distinción* 2015).

Fashion magazines contain photographs that rank alongside the most creative and familiar images in our visual universe, driving trends and informing lifestyle choices and much imitated for the power with which they communicate and the atmosphere and language they create, which have proved commercially and socially effective. Fashion could no longer exist without photography, which captures its designs for a global audience. After more than one hundred years of fashion photography, the printed image is changing rapidly, reflecting the democratisation of information and of fashion itself, and thanks to new channels of diffusion that are both more freely accessible and more agile than traditional means. For all that magazines are a dwindling force and the fashion system is increasingly questioned, images will continued to be fashion's main route of transmission, supported by the power of consumers and social media. ●



Txema Yeste (1972), *Gala*, Cadaqués, 2009, *Giclée* print on Photo Rag Baryta, 2012 season, MTIB 3.807/12, donation by Txema Yeste, 2012.

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Textiles of the Nile Valley. Coptic v.02

by SÍLVIA SALADRIGAS CHENG

Documentalist, Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil

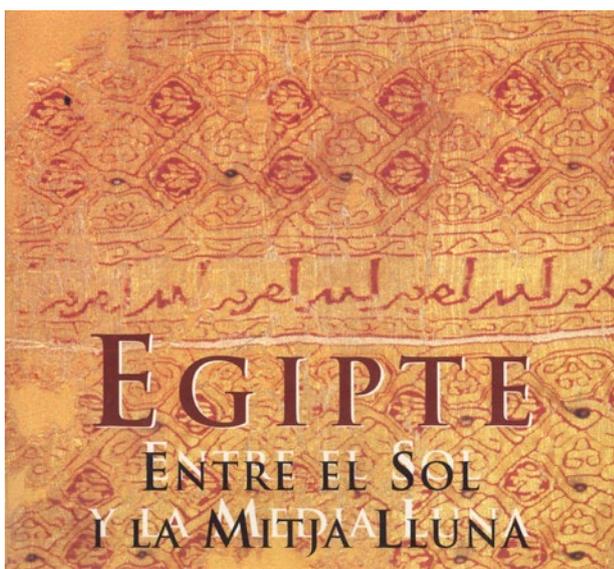
Photographs: Quico Ortega (CDMT)

¹ *Egipte, entre el Sol i la Mitja Lluna*. CDMT and Area of Editorial Services, Terrassa, 1999.

As time passes, our concepts and definitions of people and objects often change or take on new significance. When in 1999 the CDMT showcased its collection of Coptic textiles in the catalogue “Egipte entre el Sol i la Mitja Lluna” [Egypt, between the sun and the half-moon]¹, which accompanied the exhibition of the same name, the term “Coptic” was applied in a broad sense to the body of post-Pharaonic textile pieces discovered during excavations in Egypt.

Historically, the word “Coptic” was synonymous with “Egyptian”. The Greeks used the name for the inhabitants of present-day Egypt, which derived from the pharaonic name for the city of Memphis, “Het-ka-Ptah”, or “Sanctuary of the *ka* [soul] de Ptah”. Following the Muslim conquest of the region, the first syllable of the name was omitted in Arabic, ultimately giving up “Coptic”. This term was used by the conquerors to refer to the people of the Nile Valley, who in the year 641 were predominantly of Christian faith. The name therefore described both a geographical area and a specific population group.

Exhibition catalog: “Egipte entre el Sol i la Mitja Lluna”, CDMT, 1999.



These roots, however, have since lost their meaning. The “Coptic” textiles bear no relation to the modern Copts, a population with specific religious beliefs but no longer associated with a particular geographical area. In fact, many of the textiles have no link whatsoever to Christian iconography: the pieces that feature representations of classical mythology do not fall within the scope of this particular qualification of ‘Coptic’. It was important, then, to review the use of the term.

In light of the above considerations, it is now deemed preferable to describe the collection as consisting of textiles from the Nile Valley, or simply Egyptian textiles, which can then be further classified by period: Pharaonic, Greco-Roman, Byzantine or Islamic.

There have also been significant changes in the chronologies considered for this group of textiles.

2 Several works can be found in the CDMT library catalogue, at the following link: <http://goo.gl/WRsO6D>.

3 *Textilien des Mittelmeerraumes aus spätantiker bis frühislamischer Zeit*, Abegg-Stiftung Foundation, 2004.

4 Katoen Natie is a Belgian private company, founded in 1855, that originally sold and transported textile thread, primarily cotton, and now specialises in technologically advanced logistics services. Its owners have created at their head offices in Antwerp a space called “HeadquARTers” where they exhibit part of their art collection, which includes numerous textiles from Egypt and Central Asia.

5 *Methods of dating ancient textiles of the 1st millennium AD from Egypt and neighbouring countries*, Lannoo Publishers, 2007.

6 Full professor at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

7 Curator of the Museo de Artes Decorativas, Madrid.

8 “The collection of Coptic textiles in the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Madrid: the results of the dye analysis and 14C testing,” A: *Methods of dating ancient textiles of the 1st millenium AD from Egypt and neighbouring countries*. Lannoo, 2007.

9 Research and development projects funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (formerly the Ministry of Science and Innovation): “Caracterización tecnológica y cronológica de

The literature on “Coptic” textiles is plentiful² but – with the exception of the most recent examples – examines them in terms of iconography, style, or the relationship between their decorative content and that of other objects (stuccos, coins, ceramics, etc.). Many of the excavations that uncovered these pieces were not adequately documented at the time and only the most attractive or best preserved items or fragments were conserved. As a result, many items lack context and cannot be correctly catalogued.

Over the last few years, teams of specialists in various disciplines have carried out collaborative studies of the textiles, analysing fibres, dyes and techniques, and selected pieces have been carbon-14 dated. Their work has made it possible to correct the chronologies of a great many of the pieces in the collection.

One of the first outcomes of the new analyses was the publication in 2004 of the catalogue of items in Abegg-Stiftung collection.³ Some of these items were carbon-14 dated, leading author Sabine Schrenk to question the geographical origins and timelines originally established for them. Her review included an interesting reflection on the importance of defining the context in which such pieces were produced and the purposes they might have served.

In 2005, the city of Antwerp hosted the first conference of the Textiles from the Nile Valley study group, sponsored by the Belgian company Katoen Natie.⁴ Organised around the theme “Methods of dating ancient textiles of the 1st millennium AD, from Egypt and neighbouring countries”, the conference brought together archaeologists, chemists, art historians, curators and Egyptologists from many countries and institutions to discuss the results of their research. Two years later the proceedings⁵ were published, and the conference is now a biennial event at which experts present fascinating papers on the latest advances in the field. Among the speakers at the first conference were Laura Rodríguez Peinado⁶ and Ana Cabrera Lafuente⁷, who presented their study of the dyes used in the pieces exhibited at the MAD.⁸ Later, the same experts embarked on two new research projects, to which the CDMT contributed as a collaborating museum.⁹ The venture led to the presentation of a joint paper at the study group’s second conference, “Late Roman and Byzantine textiles from Egypt: some examples of furnishing textiles from Spanish

las producciones textiles coptas: antecedentes de las manufacturas textiles altomedievales españolas” (HUM2005-04610) and “Caracterización de las producciones textiles de la

tardoantigüedad y Edad Media temprana: tejidos coptos, sasánidas, bizantinos e hispano-musulmanes en las colecciones públicas españolas” (HAR2008-04161).

CDMT n.r.2705, 5th-6th c.
[See detail.](#)



10 Published in: *Clothing the House. Furnishing textiles of the 1st millennium AD from Egypt and neighbouring countries*. Lannoo Publishers, 2009.

11 Though they were found in Egypt, we have not included them in this group – 5 fragments of mummy bandage (1st century AD), 4 painted linens (1st century AD), 8 silk cloths from Akhmim (7th-9th centuries AD), 1 textile fragment from Antinopolis (5th-7th centuries AD) – nor do we consider all of these pieces to date from the Fatimid period.

12 <http://goo.gl/tvvUhg>. Partners in the initiative include Katoen Natie (Antwerp), the Musée du Louvre (Paris), the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kuns (Berlin), the Abegg-Stiftung Foundation (Riggisberg) and the National Museum of Denmark (Copenhagen).

13 Tests were carried out at *Beta Analytic Inc.* in Florida. Accelerator mass spectrometry was chosen as it is the least aggressive technique, requiring only very small sample quantities for testing.

collections”.¹⁰ Two of the featured pieces were carbon-14 dated and dye analyses were conducted on a further five, all belonging to the CDMT collection.

Of the national collections in Spain that include Egyptian textiles from the Greco-Roman period to the Islamic era, the CDMT’s is the largest, holding 284 pieces¹¹ that date from the third to the eighth century. Each of these pieces is presented and described in the 1999 exhibition catalogue “Egypt, between the sun and the half-moon”. Thanks to new studies and ongoing work during the 17 years since its publication, we have been able to add new information and obtain more accurate data, as detailed in the rest of this article.

Carbon-14 dating consists in measuring the quantity of the radioactive isotope in a given organic material. Carbon-14 exists in the atmosphere and is assimilated cumulatively by all living organisms, whether through photosynthesis (plants) or ingestion (animals). When an organism, or part of that organism, dies, the assimilation stalls and the concentration of carbon-14 slowly begins to fall. Scientists have determined the rate at which this decrease occurs, so by measuring the quantity of carbon-14 conserved by an organism it is possible to establish a relatively precise estimate of the point at which the carbon loading was interrupted. Until recently the procedure was little-used for dating textiles, being both costly and damaging to the textile, as it required a comparatively large sample to ensure accurate results. In recent years, however, costs have fallen and far smaller test fragments are needed, making carbon-14 dating a more economically viable option and enabling large groups of related samples to be tested to acquire estimates of genuine significance. The results of those projects that have used the carbon-14 technique to date textiles – from before and after the first millennium – are now being pooled through a free, open-source database maintained by the University of Bonn.¹²

Two textiles from the CDMT were selected for carbon-14 dating by accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS)¹³. The first, catalogued under record number 2705, is a fragment of a rectangular linen *clavus* decorated in purple wool. The decoration comprises a small lion within a lobed circle, a figure to one side that has been highly distorted by the near-complete loss of the weft, and a kneeling or leaning figure on the opposite side whose left hand holds up an unknown object. The second figure appears to be female and wears a round, tower-like headdress that recalls representations of the goddess Rhea (Cybele, in Latin), mother, among others, of Zeus and Poseidon. The approximate period to which the piece had originally been dated was the turn of the sixth century AD, and this has been confirmed by carbon-14, which indicated with a likelihood of 95% the period 400–540 AD and, with lesser certainty of 68%, the period 420–530 AD.



14 The analyses were carried out at the *Larco Química y Arte S.L.* in Madrid.

15 A. Cabrera has also found hemp in some of the exhibits at the Museu Tèxtil i de la Indumentària de Barcelona, as noted in her doctoral thesis: *La industrial textil copta: la colección de tejidos de la Antigüedad Tardía del Museu Tèxtil i d'Indumentària de Barcelona*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2015, unpublished.

The second textile to undergo carbon-14 was item 3869, a heavily deteriorated piece decorated with a row of swimming *putti* holding offerings, each separated by aquatic plants and lotus flowers. The decoration is presented in a variety of colours against a red background, but the figures themselves are crude and simplistic in appearance, which guided the original dating of between the ninth and eleventh centuries. Carbon-14 dating, which matches the findings for similar pieces, situates the piece with a likelihood of 95% between the years 600 and 660 AD, and with a lower probability of 68% between 620 and 650 AD, making it at least two centuries older than originally thought.

Just as correctly identifying the structure and fibres of textiles helps to pinpoint their geographical origins and date of production, analysing the dyes that they contain can also provide important information. The dyes used in Al Andalus in the Middle Ages, for example, were not the same as those employed in Central Asia during the same period, and the use of cochineal indicates a clear *terminus ante quem* for dating purposes.

The items with record numbers 87, 207, 222, 245 and 304 were analysed using high-resolution liquid chromatography,¹⁴ which identified the typical dyes used in Egyptian textiles from the period: madder red (*Rubia tinctorum*) for the red shades, indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*) for the blues, and indigo with weld (*Indigofera tinctoria* with *Reseda luteola*) for the greens. Fibre analysis, meanwhile, revealed both the linen and wool typical of pre-Islamic Egyptian textiles but also the use of hemp in certain parts of the decoration in one piece (rec. no. 207). Hemp is rarely described in the literature, but this is presumably because the laboratory tests that would identify it were not carried out, its appearance being near-identical to that of linen to the naked eye.¹⁵

CDMT n.r.87, 5th-6th c. [See detail.](#)



CDMT n.r.207, 5th-7th c.
[See detail.](#)





CDMT n.r.222, 5th-6th c.
[See details.](#)

CDMT n.r.245, 5th-6th c.
[See details.](#)



CDMT n.r. 304, 3rd-5th c.
[See detail.](#)



16 Textile restorer and researcher, respectively, attached to the art collection owned by Katoen Natie, Antwerp.

17 “Textiles, tools and techniques of the 1st millennium AD from Egypt and neighbouring countries”. Lannoo, 2015.

The CDMT is now part of the team in the project “Las manufacturas textiles andalúses: caracterización y estudio interdisciplinario” (HAR2014-54918-P), which is scheduled to run for three years, will adopt the model of previous studies, using a multidisciplinary perspective to establish the links between a variety of Medieval textile pieces. Alongside this, the CDMT is also involved in the project “Medieval Textiles in Iberia and the Mediterranean”, funded by the Fondation Max van Berchem (Geneva) and the Pasold Research Fund (United Kingdom), which consists of a complementary epigraphic study of the textile corpus.

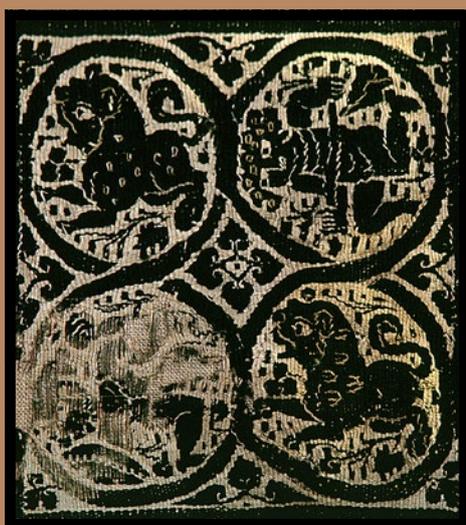
In 2012 and 2013, the CDMT also contribution to the project “Measurements and fitting of Egyptian children’s tunics of the 1st millenium AD”, led by Anne Kwaspen and Chris Verhecken-Lammens.¹⁶ The authors examined the patterns of 60 children’s tunics from 14 different collections and used the information to reconstruct how they would have been produced and worn. One of the pieces included in the study was the tunic owned by the CDMT, stored under record number 263. The results were presented at the 8th Textiles from the Nile Valley conference and published in the accompanying proceedings.¹⁷

Two other items, from the Tove Alm collection (rec. no. 7495 and 7509), are currently part of research being carried out by Maciej Szymaszek for the preparation of his doctoral thesis *Tracing the Provenance of Ancient Egyptian Textiles: Tove Alm’s Collection* at the University of Gothenburg. The thesis looks particularly at the evolution of human representations in Egyptian textiles and uses carbon-14 dating to situate the pieces chronologically.

In 1968, the Swedish antiquarian Tove Alm sold part of his collection of Egyptian textiles to what was then the Terrassa Provincial Textile Museum. The



CDMT n.r.263, 4th-6th c.





CDMT n.r. 7495, 6th-7th c.

18 We have not included in this group the first-century Egyptian textiles donated by the Monastery of Montserrat.

19 For more information on how the Egyptian textile collection was put together, see: CARBONELL, Sílvia. “La col·lecció de teixits coptes del Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil de Terrassa.” In: *Quaderns del Museu Episcopal de Vic*. Vic, 2004.

20 Imatex link: <http://goo.gl/wYF8hP>.

present-day CDMT’s other Egyptian textiles¹⁸ come from the Biosca and Viñas collections¹⁹. Through the work of Sílvia Carbonell, it has been established that Ricard Viñas bought examples from various antiquarians and collectors around the world: from Jacques Kassapian in Paris, Gottfried Enster in Zurich, Albert Honnegger in Lyon, A. Indanyan and from Marçal Olivari and Emili Cabot in Barcelona. Thanks to information received from Laura Rodríguez, it has been possible to identify 36 items that came originally from the collection of Anastasio Páramo, from which they were transferred to the Ignasi Abadal collection and later the collection of Josep Biosca, who in 1946 founded the Biosca Textile Museum, the seed from which the CDMT grew.

The Egyptian textiles were the first collection at the CDMT to be photographed with a digital camera, in 1996, and were also the first exhibits to be made freely available in our on-line image library, **IMATEX**. At the time of its launch, IMATEX was a pioneering initiative at the national level, conceived as a novel solution to the longstanding problem of balancing conservation with dissemination.

This year all of the pieces have been re-photographed. The original images, obtained with our first digital camera, have been greatly improved upon, and we now have much sharper and more detailed views of each item in the collection, whose colourful designs – crude but intricately worked – make them so endearing.²⁰



CDMT n.r.7509, 6th-8th c.
[See detail.](#)

In February 2017 the CDMT will host the exhibition “Ancient Egypt and the Coptic Textiles of Montserrat,” curated by the Fundació Abadia de Montserrat, which showcases pieces from the Roca collection, and an exhibition of photographs taken at excavations in Oxyrhynchus, organised by the Catalan Society of Egyptology.

The study of historical textiles is currently attracting considerable interest. New research techniques, analyses and tests have made it possible to conduct a critical revision of the literature, as well opening up new channels of investigation into aspects hitherto unaddressed. In this new scenario, team work has a crucial role in facilitating the sharing of knowledge and resources, enabling experts to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the many aspects that the complex field of textile research presents. ●

On textiles, colonies and *indians*. A tale from across the seas

by JOAN MIQUEL LLODRÀ, art historian

The relationship between Spain and its former colonies can be viewed from a number of perspectives. Particularly important among them is the textile industry, which had numerous repercussions for the economies, societies and cultures involved in Spain's colonial adventure, particularly in Catalonia, which from 1778 onwards was a gateway for Atlantic trade. It is the history of this industry that underpins an exhibition organised by the Area for Culture of Begur Town Council for the 13th Fira d'Indians, an event that celebrates the enduring relationship between Begur and Cuba originated by prosperous Catalan traders who returned from the colonies, known as *indians* or *americanos*.

From the earliest days of the colonial period, the Antilles provided Europe with a great many products to satisfy the needs of an increasingly consumerist Old Continent society. Aside from coffee, sugar and tobacco, brought from Havana, Catalan ports were inundated with ships carrying bales of flocked cotton, much of it from the great plantations of New Orleans and Charleston. The fibre was used to fuel the growth of a Catalan textile industry that was still in its infancy.

Over the course of the nineteenth century a great many Catalan entrepreneurs – based in Cuba, in Barcelona, or on both sides of the Atlantic – grew wealthy from the cotton trade. Jaume Torrents, who traded the route between Barcelona, Havana and New Orleans, and the Vidal Quadras and Baradat families, *indians* who also ran trade routes, can be considered alongside the Biada i Prats brothers (sons of the Mataró-born *indià* Miquel Biada) and the Amell brothers, born into a family of *indians* in Sitges, who became two of the largest importers of flocked cotton in Barcelona.

It was thanks to this colonial cotton that the industry driven by Catalonia's *indians* reached its peak. Barcelona became the production capital of southern Europe for printed cottons, which were manufactured in huge quantities at affordable prices. In only a short time the Catalan capital grew to be the largest and most established supplier of printed cottons not only to the rest of Spain but also to the colonies themselves, which as well as producers and exporters of the raw material had also become major import markets.

Poster for the exhibition organised for the 13th Fira d'Indians in Begur, 2016.

Engraving of the 19th Century preserved in the Historical Archive Fidel Fita in Arenys de Mar.



The cottons manufactured in Catalonia were the most commonly sold fabrics across the Antilles, together with those imported from North America. Printed cotton was particularly popular among Cubans, for hygiene, cleanliness and comfort but also for aesthetic reasons. Equally successful were linens, imported in their raw state from northern Europe, printed in the factories of Barcelona's *indians* and sent in considerable volume to the colonial market. Cotton and linen fabrics produced in Catalonia quickly found favour ahead of sheepskin, first imported from Castilla and Andalucia, taffeta and silks, also of Spanish origin, and even linens produced in regions as renowned as Laval (France) and Landshut (Germany).

Another emblematic Catalan product exported to the Americas was lace, whose negligible weight and high price made it a prized commodity in transatlantic trade. Production houses along the east coast of Spain sent tens of thousands of yards of lace to adorn the clothes of the wealthy classes. The Catalan city of Mataró also provided the colonial market with large quantities of knitted fabrics: inexpensive products, many of them in bright colours, such as socks, t-shirts and stockings. *Hijos de Marfà* and *Font, Clavell i Coll* were two Mataró-based manufacturers of knitted goods that found particular success in the colonial market.

The success of the cotton industry following its emergence in the eighteenth century was not the only factor behind the rapid industrialisation in Catalonia over the course of the 1800s. The region's industrial revolution, though primarily textile-based, also saw rapid development in the mechanical and chemical sectors, and owed much to the great fortunes of the *indians* who had made their new home in Cuba. From the 1840s onward, it was their capital that funded the textile factories which would make Catalonia one of the foremost industrial powers in Europe. There are numerous examples from across



Fragment of indienne, printed cotton. Last quarter of the eighteenth century, CDMT rec. no. 2922. ©CDMT. Quico Ortega.

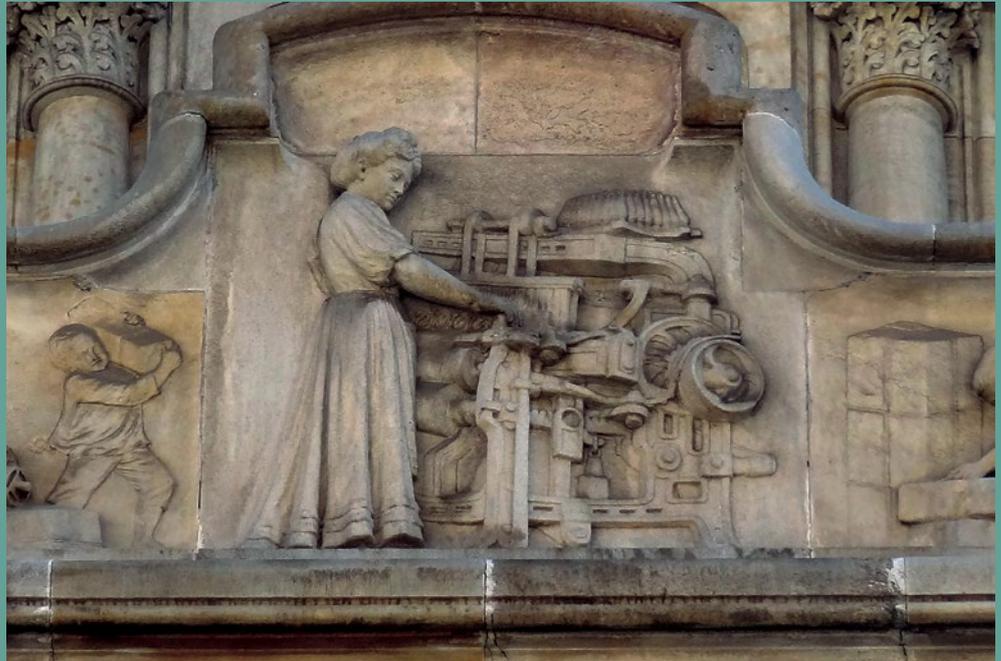
Catalonia of *americanos* who either invested in or took direct charge of these factories, notably Miquel Biada, financier of the first Spanish railway, who invested 100,000 pesetas of the era in a cotton mill in Mataró, and Josep Antoni Salom, who in 1854 invested in the cotton firm *Santacana Sadurní y Cia* in Vilanova i la Geltrú, a town in which 60% of the capital poured into the cotton industry came from the Antilles.

The Antilles-based *indians* did not only fund cotton mills; their capital was also put into the wool industry. Antoni Samà i Urgellès, for example, invested part of his fortune in a cotton mill in Esparreguera and in a company specialising in the production of woollen cloth, which in 1872 operated 114 looms with 5,700 spindles.

Of the many Catalan *indians* who invested in the textile industry, the most emblematic is perhaps Joan Güell (1800-1872), who made his fortune in Cuba and played a major role in economic and political life in Catalonia and Spain, particularly between 1850 and 1870. Following a formative journey to England and various other experiences from which he gathered valuable information, in 1848 Güell formed an association with the mechanic Domingo Ramis and founded a modern textile factory in the Sants district of Barcelona that obtained exclusive rights to the national production of velvets and cotton corduroys, fabrics commonly used by the urban and rural working classes but which no Spanish manufacturer had been able to produce successfully. The

Caricature of the industrialist and *india* Joan Güell, Josep Parera (1828?-1902), Barcelona, mid-nineteenth century, Frederic Marès Museum, rec. no. 5877. ©Guillem F-H.





Detail of the balcony of Casa Berenguer in Barcelona.
©Centre d'Estudis Domenechians, Canet de Mar.

company, *Güell, Ramis y Cía.* (the factory was popularly known as the *Vapor Vell de Sants*), initially relied on English machinery and the expertise of English technicians and would become one of the leading cotton manufacturers in Spain, with the largest number of spindles found anywhere in the Catalan cotton spinning industry.

The work of Joan Güell was taken up and expanded by his son, Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi (1846-1918), who in 1890 joined forces with the engineer Ferran Alsina and transferred the factory to Santa Coloma de Cervelló. This was the first step in the creation of the *Colònia Güell*, the company town that would remain in use until 1973. Despite his prominent role as an industrialist, Eusebi Güell is now primarily known as the defining patron of the great architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926). Indeed, the Catalan *modernisme* movement was made possible in no small part by the wealth that flowed from the colonies and the growth of the textile industry, as can be seen in the ornamental motifs of many buildings from the era.

One of the most renowned *modernista* painters, Ramon Casas, the 150th anniversary of whose birth is celebrated this year, was very much a product of the long and fruitful relationship between the colonies and the Catalan textile industry. Casas was the grandson, nephew and son of *indians*; his father had made his fortune in Matanzas (Cuba) and his mother, Elisa Carbó, herself the daughter of an *indià* who bankrolled various textile firms, became the owner in 1907 of the company *Isidro Puig y Cía.*, based in Sant Benet de Bages and founded in 1856. The family fortune ensured that Ramon Casas had no material needs and could devote his whole life to his one passion: painting.

Of the vast oeuvre that survives, Casas is perhaps best defined by the beauty and sensuality of forms and colours in his portraits of *chulas* and *manolas*. Many of these stereotyped figures were depicted with a silk accessory whose fine texture, extoci image and rich combination of embroidered colours gained it great popularity in Spanish society: the Manila shawl. While the Spanish



Manila shawl, natural embroidered silk, early twentieth century, Viñas collection, L'Arca.

colonies never developed major textile industries of their own, they were the setting-off point for important textile products exported to Europe. Manila shawls, despite taking their name from the port city that exported them to Spain, in fact originated in China, a country with a centuries-old history of silk weaving.

Spanish traders wasted no time in adding the product to the range of exotic and luxurious items shipped from Manila, which crossed the Pacific between the Philippines and Seville from the late sixteenth century onwards. Originally used as coverlets or rugs, Manila shawls would eventually become one of the typical accessories of the Spanish woman's wardrobe, and though the earliest wearers were wealthy ladies, by the late-nineteenth century they were a common sight across all social strata, particularly in the regency period of Maria Christina (1833-1840), even being adopted into regional dress.

A history of textiles in the colonial territories before the Spanish conquest would itself provide ample material for more than one book. The material and symbolic value of textiles in the Mayan and Incan cultures, the production of *obrajes* (textile plants) across South America, and the great diversity of fibres



Surplice for Pope Leo XIII, 1887, pineapple yarn and cotton embroidery. Apostolic Sacristy, Vatican City ©Txeni Gil. [See detail.](#)

and dyes used across the continent are just some of the many themes that could be addressed. Here, however, we focus on a fabric produced in the Philippines, fine in appearance but deceptively strong, which came to be known in some circles as ‘paradise cloth’. It was produced from the pineapple plant, native to Mexico, which adapted quickly to the sun and climate of the Philippine archipelago. Local artisans familiar with Chinese and Malay customs extracted a fibre from the long leaves that can be spun into yarn to create the finely textured and attractive cloth, *nipis*, which is hailed as among the most unique, sophisticated and exclusive fabrics ever produced. From the sixteenth century, embroidered *nipis* was used to make clothing and accessories for the men, women and children of the upper classes and decorative fabrics commonly found on the beds and tables of royal households. The golden age of *nipis* coincided with the last years of Spanish rule in the archipelago. After 1898, what had once been the epitome of eastern luxury, shipped around the world, fell into decline and was gradually forgotten by the world.

Within the vast commercial and economic framework erected by the textile industry, small businesses, shops and department stores also played



Fan decorated with colonial scene, painted satin, cherry wood, brass, last quarter of the nineteenth century, Arenys de Mar Museum, rec. no. 3349.

an important role. Travel journals, chronicles, newspapers and literary works describe the intense commercial activity of colonial Cuba, referring specifically to grand establishments dedicated to the sale of clothing – many of them run by Catalans – that displayed an enormous variety of products. The *indians* also funded the opening of large metropolitan stores in the home country. Pablo del Puerto and Eduardo Conde Giménez, for example, natives of Madrid who made their fortunes in Cuba, opened a shop selling shirts and linens in Barcelona, which in 1881 became *Almacenes El Siglo*, one of the most popular department stores in the city. Half a century later, Pepín Fernández and Ramón Areces, whose wealth also came from the Antilles, opened in Madrid the department stores *Galerías Preciados* and *El Corte Inglés*, respectively, two of the most prominent businesses in the production and commercialisation of Spanish textiles.

It was in stores such as these that affluent Cubans bought the fabric for their clothes. In Cuba, financial and social divisions were not only drawn along lines of race but also – as in most civilisations – because of clothing. Those without the means to buy clothes made in Paris, London, Madrid or the capitals of North America, following the latest fashions, had their own clothes made by tailors or designers – one of the most lucrative professions on the island – who either produced their own designs or imitated as closely as possible the trends of the old continent.

The tropical climate, however, soon saw the thick wools, cashmeres and damasks of Europe replaced by lighter fabrics with a softer feel: cotton and



The *indians* Vicenç Ferrer Bataller and Josep Caner, Cuba. Historical Archive of Begur.

linen – more breathable, helping the wearer to deal with the heat and keeping the skin cool – and simpler garments in lighter colours gradually became the norm. In time, a person's style of dress would ultimately come to reflect their stance on the future of Cuba: whether the island should remain under Spanish rule or seek independence.

The situation in the fields, however, was quite different; for a number of years the local population continued to dress in wool flannels, which are poor conductors of heat. Not only did this fabric irritate the skin, it also required more assiduous cleaning than cotton and provided a breeding environment for insects, eventually causing it to fall out of favour. The clothes worn by slaves, meanwhile, made from the cheapest and poorest quality fabrics, warrant a study of their own. Some slave owners employed seamstresses specifically tasked with supplying clothes for people they considered to be beneath the rest of society. From 1872, however, the famous American brand Montgomery Ward began to mass-produce a specific range of clothes for slaves in standard sizes. It is of anecdotal interest – without wishing to be frivolous – that Josep Xifré



Portrait of Judith Downing Xifré,
Fidel Fita Historical Archive,
Arenys de Mar ©Ramon Soler.

Casas, originally from Arenys de Mar and one of the wealthiest *indians* of his time, was said to send his slaves out into the streets of Havana each Sunday in white trousers, frock coats and top hats embroidered with his initials.

Clothing was one of the aspects that distinguished the returning *indians* in Spanish society, as were their frequent involvement in philanthropic initiatives, the use of Spanish or Catalan littered with colonial terms, and the construction of opulent mansions festooned with all manner of textiles. Although in the popular imagination they dressed in the style of the Antilles – a white linen suit, the famous Panama hat, and a waistcoat from which a large gold pocket watch hung – the *americanos* in fact dressed expensively, in the style of the European bourgeoisie and nobility with whom they wished to mix and be identified. This can be seen in portraits, sculptures and photographs from the period, in which solemn expressions and luxurious upholstery frame the quintessential garments of the wealthy classes – dress coats and frock coats, white shirts with heavily starched collars, waistcoats and bowed cravats.

The wives of the Catalan *indians* displayed far greater sartorial extravagance. One of the most extraordinary examples was the famed socialite and eccentric Judith Downing (New York 1801-Paris 1868), wife of Josep Xifré, who

moved in the most exclusive circles of Parisian society and shared intimate friendships with the Countess of Montijo – mother of Eugénie de Montijo, the future Empress consort of France – and Prosper Mérimée. The author often commented on her elegance and exquisite taste in clothes – luxurious fabrics and the finest accessories – and this is borne out by numerous portraits that survive, enduring images of a true style icon.

The colonial period may now be in the distant past, but the ties that bind Catalonia and Spain to the former colonies remain very much alive. As globalisation creates an ever more homogenous society, it is pleasing to see that certain fabrics, garments or accessories continue to tell a tale from overseas that, for all its darker aspects, enriched our lives in so many ways. The enduring example is the *guayabera*, the quintessential Cuban shirt, which has become a link between Cuba, the Caribbean and the rest of the world. ●

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The historical archives of *Grobelàstic S.A.*

The importance of heritage preservation

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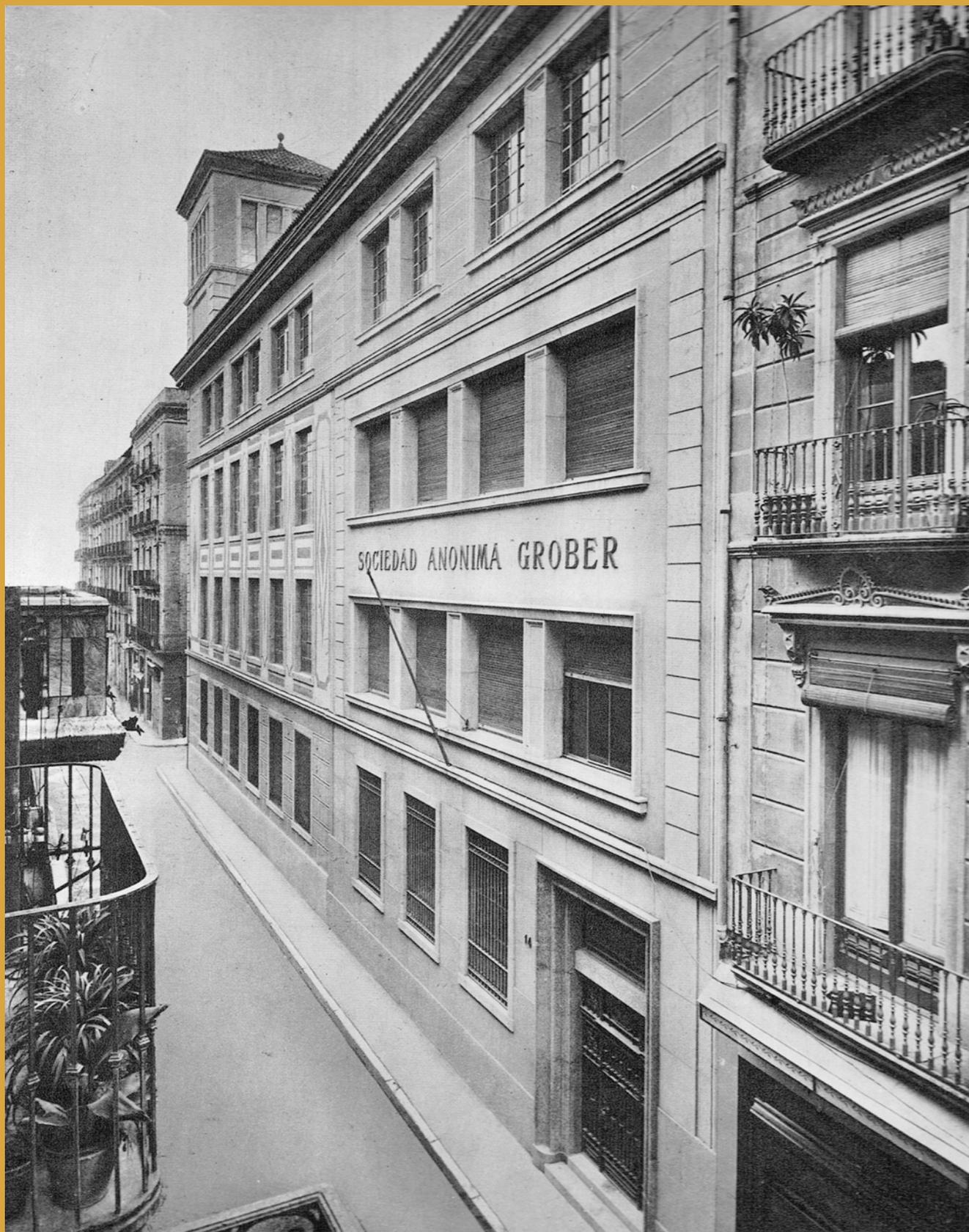
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Photographs: Grobelàstic archives

Archive: collection of the documentation generated and received by a public body, a religious or secular institution, an industrial or commercial business, a family or an individual in the course of their activity, conserved for legal or historical usage.

Thus reads the English translation of the original definition given in the 1995 edition of the *Diccionari de la llengua catalana*. From this definition we can infer that the creation of an archive is driven by the will of a person who understands perfectly the enduring importance of the documents it is to contain and the value of their orderly storage; what is less evident is that there are people capable of sensing this importance at the very moment a document is created. It is with this in mind that we must celebrate the vision and the will – as well as the remarkable constancy – of Magí Borrell Portabella, who rescued from obscurity (and from possible destruction) the abundance of documentation generated by the forerunners of the company *Grobelàstic S.A.* from the nineteenth century until 1984, when the present-day company was incorporated. The firm's head offices are home to a series of historical archives that chart the complexities of the commercial activities that preceded its creation, which date back to 1890 in the case of the company *S.A. Grober* in Girona and stretch even further into the past in the case of *Nacional de Manufacturas Matas S.A.*, a company originally based in Barcelona. As the Catalan capital grew, the *Nacional de Manufacturas Matas S.A.* factory was transferred to Pallejà, on the banks of the River Llobregat, where it formed part of a group of enterprises run by the Portabella family from Manresa, who oversaw a major hub of textile manufacturing in Catalonia, particularly in the production of ribbons. The factory specialised for many years in the production of accessories and adornments for clothing, including scalloped trims, satins, *gros-grain* and Jacquard-decorated ribbon, while *S.A. Grober* initially specialised in the production, dyeing and finishing of braid and laces in silk, wool and cotton, only later moving into the production of buttons and elastic fabrics.

Façade of the Grober factory in Girona, 1940.

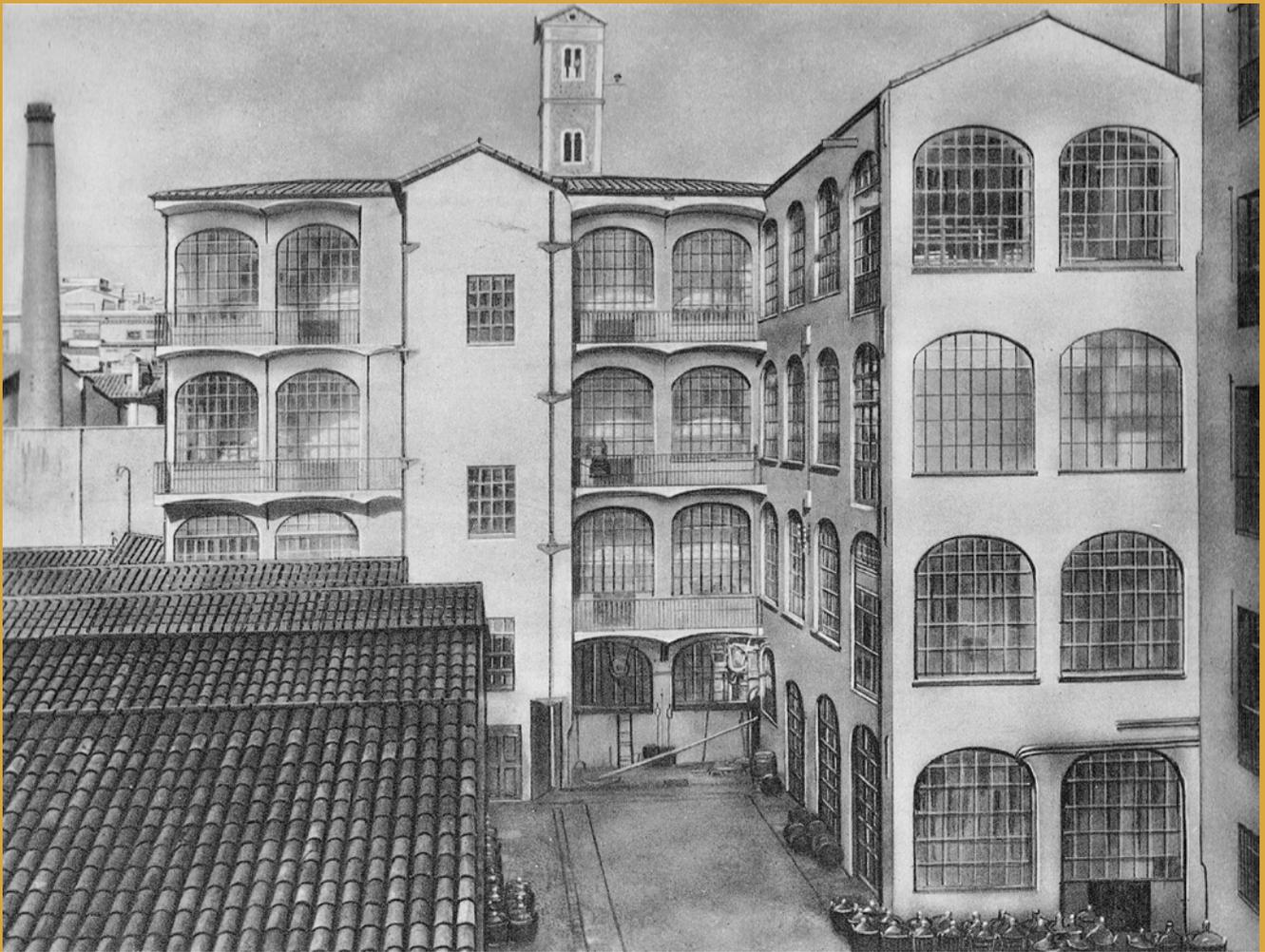


Detail of mohair spinners.
Grober factory, Bescanó, 1920s.



Keen to save many thousands of documents from destruction, Magí Borrell Portabella was implicitly aware that the vast collection should not be merely stored away but rather archived for the future and clearly classified, placed in a location that would allow easy access and consultation for many years to come. The location that met these requirements was the Regional Archive of Maresme, in Mataró, an area that was once home to many of the emerging textile businesses that have long since disappeared or seen their premises converted into spaces that no longer evoke their prominent role in Catalonia's industrial past.

In his endeavours to conserve this important collection of documents, Magí Borrell Portabella pays homage to his recent and more distant ancestors. They are brought vividly to life through the testimony of signed and stamped documents that open a window on a period of flourishing industrial and commercial activity that provided a valuable source of income to many people in Barcelona, Pallejà, Girona, Bescanó and Arenys de Munt.



Courtyard of the Grober factory in Girona, 1930.

Historical researchers interested in *histoire appliquée*, or public history, have long viewed company archives as particularly useful to both the general and specific areas of their work, and recognise their value as a structured body of material on past practices that has practical applications for organisations in the present.

Recent years have seen a growing awareness in Catalonia of the need to preserve documents of this type, once dismissed as unimportant. There is a new attitude towards the constructive exploitation of this commercial source of historical memory, closely tied to a growing understanding the country's industrial heritage and efforts to harness it for new purposes. This emerging trend, which builds on the work of researchers interested in local and economic history, has prompted more detailed study of the period of industrialisation in Catalonia and brought a new appreciation of the value of company archives, particularly those of industrial firms.

The archives of S.A. *Grober*, which has been based in Girona, Bescansó (Gironès) and Arenys de Munt (Maresme), and *Nacional de Manufacturas Matas S.A.*, founded in Barcelona and later moved to Pallejà (Baix Llobregat), make a positive contribution to this movement and are a valuable legacy for the future.



Interior of the central hall, used for the production of braids and cords. Grober factory, Girona, 1930.

The archive reflects the often adverse historical contexts that the two companies had to tackle, not least the Civil War from 1936 to 1939, which is perfectly illustrated in the documents. It also sheds light on the corporate philosophy imparted to S.A. *Grober* by Emili and Joan Portabella Barrera, which encompassed many social and cultural activities that are fondly remembered by the communities of Girona, Besanó and Arenys de Munt. Though first and foremost a business, the company was not only a commercial concern; it also served as an environment in which workers could socialise and grow as people and provided support to families through periods in which neither society nor the government offered extensive opportunities to learn or train, especially in the aftermath of the Civil War. With a patriarchal spirit that extended to workers' families, the company launched a range of initiatives, among them nurseries, that complemented the wide range of services offered by the *Germandats de Socors Mutus* (benefit societies), establishing affiliations with state primary schools and the *Escola d'Oficis i Arts Decoratives* (school of arts and crafts), funding the choral society "Cants de Pàtria" in Girona and Besanó, and organising library services, sports teams, film screenings, a refectory service and an affordable lodgings programme. These many activities were clearly an effort to compensate for a lack of state and municipal provision



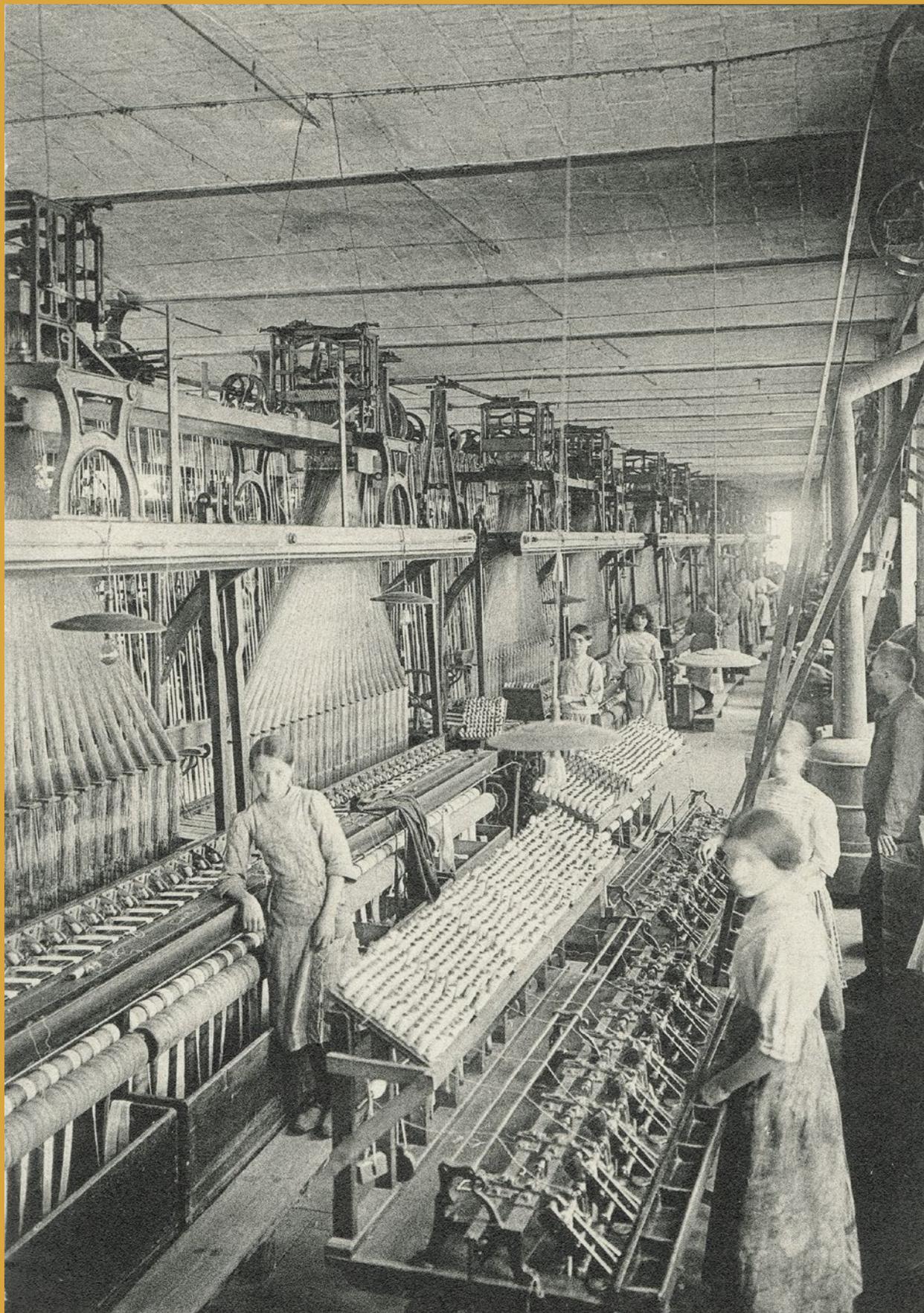
Grober factory in Girona, braiding section, 1920s.

in difficult times, and reflect the fact the Portabella Barrera brothers clearly understood the hardships faced by some of their workers. In Arenys de Munt, Joan Portabella Barrera pursued his own philanthropic goals, setting up a nursery for workers' children at *S.A. Grober*, which admitted children from one month old up to school age. All of these facilities and services are amply documented in the archive.

The wealth of materials in the archive have been classified following the parameters set for company documentation by the Archives Service of the Government of Catalonia, ensuring that each document is accurately described and detailed and can be easily accessed by researchers.

The figures speak for themselves: the materials compiled from the records of *S.A. Grober*, in Girona, Bescanó and Arenys de Munt, include some 79,000 documents, while the collection from *Nacional de Manufacturas Matas S.A.*, in Pallejà, contains around 25,000 more. Documents range from original articles of incorporation, shareholder statutes and executive resolutions to records of worker conditions, internal paperwork, and correspondence with public authorities and unions, with a particularly large body of materials on financial management, turnover and tax affairs and on production itself, including machinery specifications, quality control reports, monitoring studies and reports, and proposals for the improvement of equipment and installations. Commercial documentation includes market analyses and an abundance of correspondence with clients, with specific reference to prices, which provide

Grober factory in Girona. Mechanical looms with a Jacquard head for the production of decorative braids, 1920s.



the raw materials for potentially fascinating studies of the Catalan textile industry throughout various periods of history. The archive is also a window on the technical and technological improvements that were introduced as the companies evolved, and the extensive social initiatives referred to above, which are illustrated through a wealth of documents of unquestionable sentimental value. Finally, a series of specific documents outline the reasons behind the decision to relocate S.A. *Grober* away from Girona, as the city expanded under the Mercadal Plan.

An abundance of additional materials accompany the documents themselves, among them photographs, plans and machine schematics, which are an aid to scholars and chart interesting developments over the course of the twentieth century. The collection also tells us about shifts in fashion and how these can determine the continuing success or eventual decline of a particular product, texture or colour, as well as charting the distinct approaches that companies took in responding to each of the changes.

While all of the documents are of scholarly interest, some hold a particularly human appeal, telling us about the lives of workers, the salaries they received, the hours they worked, how they were organised, how benefits and pensions evolved, how the company managed its suppliers, the frequent power cuts when resources were scarce, and even the importance of holidays and festivals and the role that the company took in organising celebrations, cementing its place in the collective memory of the local population.

The documents, conserved with such care by *Grobelàstic S.A.*, speak to us of these and many other aspects of the company's past and will enable the scholars of the future to reconstruct realities that may otherwise have disappeared from memory forever. ●

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A museum within a museum: the textile collection at the Episcopal Museum of Vic

by JUDIT VERDAGUER I SERRAT,
curator of the Episcopal Museum of Vic (MEV)

The dignity of clothes that have been consecrated to God, that have received His blessing (...), that have born witness to the celebration of the most venerable Mystery, should be sufficient to prevent their sale as cheap merchandise, so often leading into unworthy hands and to uses not fit for such robes and ornaments. If one piece and another were to find their way to museums, where they could serve to inform under careful conservation, this fault could be excused; but they are all too often converted into decorative items for lounges and workshops, and this when they are not taken apart and condemned to a life as a chair cover or converted into cushions and placed beneath the feet of all manner of people. Who has not seen maniples used as curtain loops?¹

1 GUDIOL I CUNILL, J., “La Indumentària Litúrgica”, *Anuari dels amics de l’art litúrgic*, Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc, Barcelona, 1925, p. 155.

2 Father J. Gudiol was curator of the Episcopal Museum of Vic from 1898 until 1931.

3 Joaquim Folch i Torres uses the term “antiquaris d’espardenya” in *Destino 2/XI/ 1957*, in reference to a class of traders who dealt unscrupulously in all manner of wares, who evidently bear no resemblance to the many reputable antiquarians in our country.

4 GUDIOL I CUNILL, J., *La indumentària litúrgica*. Vic, 1918a, p. 22.

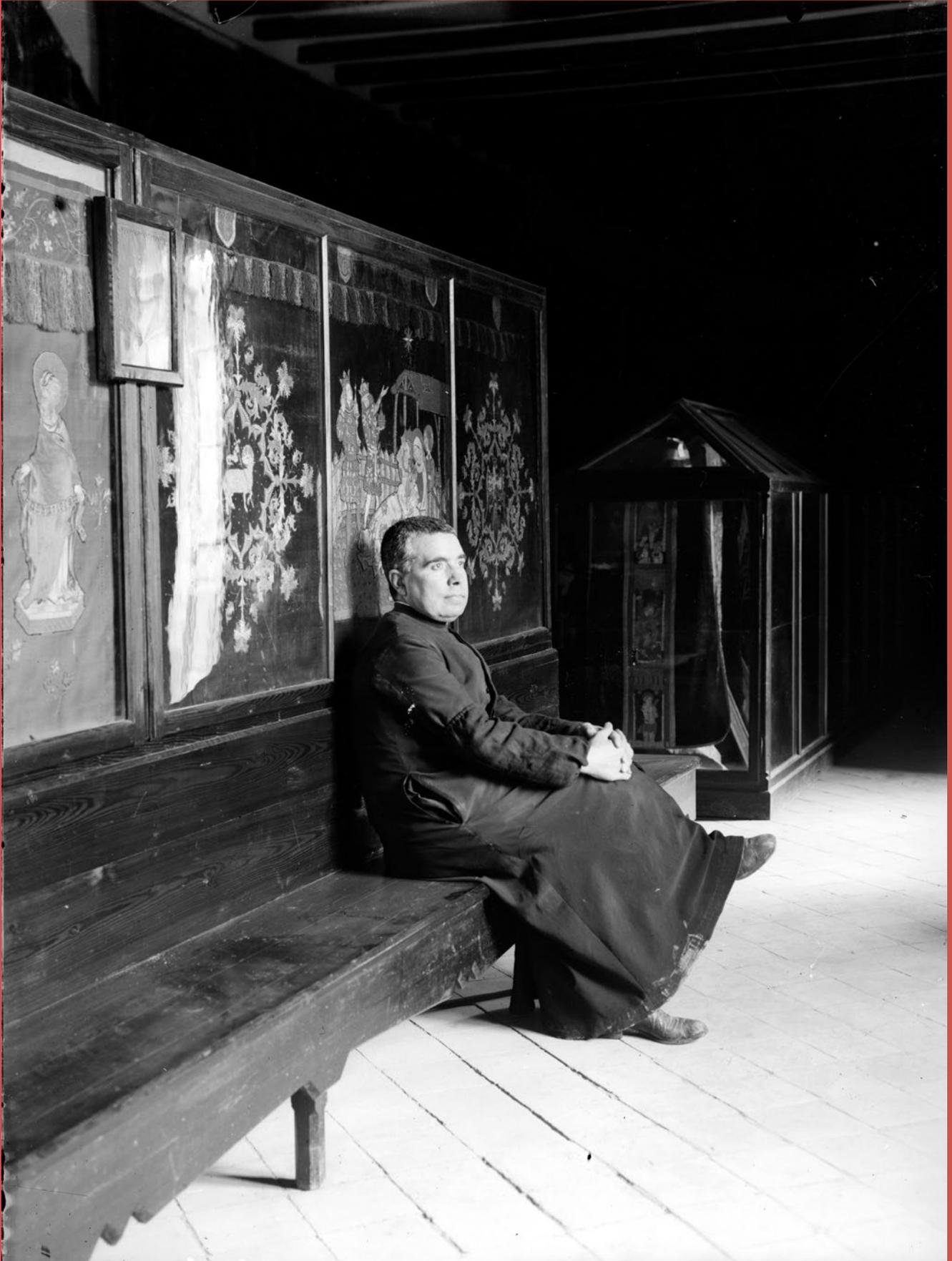
In 1925, Father Josep Gudiol² expressed in these terms his distaste at the ignoble fate of historical items of sanctified clothing and fabric. The trade of these items by “espadrille antiquarians”³, to use the term coined by Joaquim Folch i Torres, contributed to the cruel fragmentation and inexorable dispersion of many Catalan textile pieces, erasing their history and roots forever.

The safekeeping of liturgical ornaments, of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, was traditionally a matter for the religious establishment, which considered them sacred objects that must be conserved, protected and handled with respect. For many centuries it was customary for a newly appointed canon to provide his cathedral with a chasuble, which upon his death was transferred to the see, where it would be conserved.⁴ The tradition allowed the *vestis sacra* to be preserved for centuries. However, with the emergence of a new market for historical textiles, nothing could prevent whole robes or decorative sections of them being sold or exchanged time and again.

Certain episodes in the past are particularly illustrative of this phenomenon, such as the decision in 1888 to cut up and divide the pontifical robes that had covered the body of Saint Bernat Calbó⁵. Some of the pieces were distributed

5 Sant Bernat Calbó became Bishop of Vic in 1223. His tomb can be found in Vic Cathedral.

Father Josep Gudiol sitting before the frontal of the Altar of the Epiphany. Episcopal Museum of Vic, 1905-1910.



Original pontifical robes of Saint Bernat Calbó and other vestments that covered his remains in later periods, on display at the MEV.



6 GUDIOL I CUNILL, J., “Lo sepulcre de Sant Bernat Calvó, bisbe de Vic”, *Memòries del Primer Congrés d’Història de la Corona d’Aragó*. Barcelona, II, 1913.

7 Currently conserved at the Episcopal Museum of Vic, the CDMT, the Barcelona Textile and Costume Museum, the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg, Switzerland, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York.

8 The Victoria and Albert Museum was founded in London in 1852.

9 The Musée des Tissus Lyon was founded in Lyon in 1890.

as relics⁶ and others found their way into the hands of avid collectors who sold them to private owners or to museums around the world, where they remain today.⁷

The dispersion of these emblematic pontifical garments was not an isolated occurrence; the same fate befell other historical liturgical vestments, at a time when interest in the study of textiles was still new to Catalonia. The consideration of historical textiles as works of art emerged through successive specialised studies, and textiles themselves were preserved by collectors, antiquarians and scholars, who valued the country’s textile heritage and built private or public collections of great artistic worth.

A dramatic rise in value came with the founding of the first European museums to house dedicated textile exhibits, among them the Victoria and Albert Museum in London⁸ and the Musée Historique des Tissus in Lyon.⁹ The new institutions held sizeable textile collections and were the conceptual basis for the creation of the first Catalan textile collections. This focus brought new value to a genre that had previously received little appreciation, gradually affording it the artistic status it deserved.

The origins of the collection

The collection of historical textiles in Catalonia began in earnest in the nineteenth century, but it was not until well into the twentieth that the practice became widespread. The resurgence coincided with a renewed interest in recovering the *savoir faire* of traditional arts and crafts, a fascination that

10 Asociación Artístico-Arqueológica Barcelonesa. *Exposición Universal de Barcelona. Álbum de la sección de Ropas y Bordados*. Barcelona, 1888.

11 Josep Morgades was Bishop of Vic from 1882 to 1889.

emerged from *Art Nouveau* and Catalan *modernisme*. A new Catalan bourgeoisie, made wealthy by the burgeoning textile industry, quickly took an interest in the private collection of historical textiles, a trend that was no doubt a direct reaction to the unstoppable advance of industrialisation.

Many of the most prominent patrons of the arts were industrialists, who amassed sizeable textile collections that would later be sold or bequeathed to museums in Spain and abroad. Other collectors were artists of the *modernista* school, individuals with great creative sensibilities but also a feel for the importance of preserving anything linked to the arts and crafts of the past. The Episcopal Museum of Vic, for example, conserves textiles that originally formed part of the personal collections of Josep Pascó, Oleguer Junyent and Gaspar Homar. The most remarkable of these, for the number of pieces as well as their quality, was the collection of Gaspar Homar, which the Museum purchased through an antiquarian in 1934.

The origins of the textile collection at the Episcopal Museum of Vic, however, are much older, stretching back as far as the Archaeological-Artistic Exhibition held in Vic in 1868. The event was organised by a group of art and archaeology enthusiasts belonging to the local literature circle, who gathered together a large number of artistic objects from churches, convents and private houses in the region. The range of items on show included a sizeable collection of tapestries and religious ornaments, most of them on loan from Vic Cathedral. The interest attracted by the exhibition raised public curiosity in Catalonia's artistic heritage and prompted the organisers to create their own Archaeological Museum, with a permanent collection of exhibits provided by members themselves and obtained from excavations in the area. Shortly after, the collection was broken up and passed to the newly created Episcopal Museum of Vic.

It was in this context of cultural effervescence that the Bishop of Vic decided to participate in the 1888 Universal Exhibition in Barcelona, exhibiting a large collection of artistic objects from his diocese, most notable among them a series of Romanesque panel paintings and textile pieces of great artistic value, including the famous 'Witches' Cloth' and pallia of the Annunciation, the Evangelists, Epiphany and Piety, all from the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses.¹⁰

The success of the exhibition, which received three gold medals, one of them for the magnificent fabrics and embroidery, encouraged the Bishop of Vic, Josep Morgades,¹¹ to set up the Episcopal Archaeological-Artistic Museum of Vich – now the Episcopal Museum of Vic – and was a clarion call to the deans of his diocese to conserve the artistic treasures held by

Display of liturgical dress in the former building of the Episcopal Museum of Vic, 1934.



¹² Circular by Josep Morgades, Bishop of Vic, published in the *Boletín Oficial Eclesiástico del Obispado de Vic*, 15/07/1889. [Arxiu i Biblioteca Episcopal de Vic].

¹³ Josep Gudiol i Cunill published various studies on textiles, the most prominent of which can be found in *Nocions d'Arqueologia Sagrada Catalana*. Vic, 1931-1933 (revised Edition, updating the original 1902 version); *La indumentària litúrgica*. Vic, 1918; "Per la història de la tapisseria a Catalunya", *La Veu de Catalunya*, 1918.

their parishes. Bishop Morgades reminded them that they had the obligation to safeguard all of the historical objects in their churches and invited them to transfer their works of art to the Museum, where such valuable religious heritage could be suitably looked after.¹²

In 1891 the Episcopal Museum of Vic opened its doors to the public, presenting a large collection of textiles and liturgical vestments gathered from the trousseau of the bishops and canons of Vic Cathedral, the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses and churches in the local area. The ceaseless efforts of the Museum's first curators to expand and diversify the collection would lead to a number of important acquisitions from antiquarians and private collectors, including many ancient textiles of distinct styles from different periods, gradually shaping the collection we know today.

It was Josep Gudiol who set the initiative in motion, demonstrating a keen understanding of how to stimulate interest in recovering and investigating the forgotten textile treasures of Catalonia's churches and cathedrals.¹³ During his time as curator and in his work as a researcher he worked tirelessly to spread knowledge and encourage wider study of the Museum's textile collection.



Sketch by Federico Correa of the plans for the textile and clothing gallery. Federico Correa and Alfonso Milà were the architects who designed the new MEV building, opened in 2002.

The current collection

Today, the [Episcopal Museum of Vic](#) has some 2000 exhibits, making up a distinctive collection that is internationally renowned for the variety and prestige of its textiles. The richness of the textile and clothing collection makes it a veritable museum within a museum, and to ensure the correct conservation of each exhibit a dedicated exhibition space was created with its own unique design, setting it apart from the other galleries in the Museum. The space houses a representative selection of artistically valuable historic textiles and an exceptional collection of liturgical vestments that perfectly illustrates the history of this form of religious ornamentation.

The textiles on show at the Episcopal Museum cover a period stretching from the ninth century to the very recent past. The earliest pieces are Coptic and Byzantine fabrics, and Hispano-Arabic textiles such as the renowned altar frontal known popularly as the 'Witches' Cloth', a *unicum* of its type. These are followed by a series of velvets and silks produced in Italy and Spain between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, adorned with rich



▲ The textile and clothing gallery at the Episcopal Museum of Vic, in 2005.

▶ Coptic textiles mounted on protective backing.



Altar frontal known as the “Witches’ Cloth”, Al Andalus, first half of the twelfth century. From the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses MEV 557.



14 An excerpt from this article was published in French in 2010: Verdagner Serrat, Judit. “*Fastes de la Couronne d’Aragon*” *Dialogue entre les broderies et les tissus du Musée des Tissus de Lyon et du Musée Épiscopal de Vic*. Ed. Musée des Tissus Lyon et MEV. Lyon-Vic, 2010. pp. 16-19. The catalogue was compiled for the exhibition in Lyon in 2010, which was a joint initiative of the Musée des Tissus and the Episcopal Museum of Vic.

needle-painted embroidery, the finest examples of which are the robes of Abbot Vilalba and the meticulously detailed altar frontals from the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses. In the fourteenth-century chasuble of Bishop Bellera the Museum also has an example of *Opus Anglicanum*, an exceptional representation of embroidered goldwork and coloured silks. Items from subsequent centuries include Flemish tapestries, upholstery fabrics with large plant motifs, extravagant *bizarres* and exquisite imitation needlework, displayed alongside printed calicos and early examples of block-stamped fabrics from the late 1700s. The textile collection at the Episcopal Museum of Vic is completed by sets of liturgical vestments from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with innovative designs¹⁴. ●

The Contemporary Tapestry Museum of Sant Cugat

Discovering and disseminating textile art through educational projects

by LLUÍS CAMPINS, director of the Sant Cugat Museums
and HELENA MINUBSA, head of education at the Sant Cugat Museums
Photographs: @LocalPres

In May 2003 the Sant Cugat Museum opened a new site specifically designed to showcase the legacy of the city's textile industry: Casa Aymat, now the [Contemporary Tapestry Museum](#) (MTC) of Sant Cugat.

Since its creation, the objective of Casa Aymat has been to tell the story of one of the most prolific and characteristic artistic movements in Catalonia in the latter half of the twentieth century; one that, towards the end of the 1980s, and after a period of great splendour, fell into such decline that it all but disappeared from memory. This forgotten movement was that of contemporary Catalan tapestry, which through a group of artists that included Josep Grau Garriga,





Aurèlia Muñoz, Josep Royo, Carles Delclaux, Dolors Oromí, Teresa Conte, Maria Assumpció Raventós, Maria Teresa Codina and Mercè Diogène gained a standing comparable to that of major movements outside Spain, for example in France (where Jean Lurçat displayed his mastery of the technique), Poland (where the foremost exponent was Magdalena Abakanowicz), and Yugoslavia.

In continuing to promote the textile legacy of Sant Cugat, the MTC recalls events of the early twentieth century through the figure of Thomas Aymat, the *noucentista* artist who founded the Aymat Carpet and Tapestry Factory, which represented the pinnacle of the craft in Catalonia during the first half of the twentieth century (producing carpets for the Parliament of Catalonia and the tapestry for the grand staircase of the Barcelona City Council building), and the Catalan Tapestry School, established in Sant Cugat in the second half of the century and overtly innovative in its approach to the textile arts.

The MTC is, therefore, a textile museum, since it deals exclusively with textile materials. However, in the wider context of textile museums in Spain, it is unique in addressing textile production specifically from the point of view of artistic expression. This, of course, stems from the fact that the Catalan Tapestry School was, through undeniably a business venture, first and foremost an artistic endeavour. Everyone who participated in it did so from a wholly artistic perspective and with a purely artistic desire. As such, the MTC is also an art museum, in that it is a museum of textile art.

With this in mind, the Museum's mission encompasses a range of dimensions that dovetail around its central theme:

- the technical dimension, showing how contemporary tapestries are created using highly specific plans and technical procedures, very different to those employed for classic tapestries;
- the artistic dimension, since the Catalan School represents a renewal of contemporary artistic language through textile expression;
- the ideological dimension, as contemporary tapestry is associated not only with the desire for artistic renewal, but also – inevitably – with the cultural, moral, sociological and political ideals of Catalonia, which typify the anti-Franco stance;
- the pedagogical dimension, a key aspect in projects developed by the Sant Cugat Museums, where education is integrated as a key constituent of action, and which has been found to be inherently necessary in the socialization of contents that are typically complex and somewhat removed from today's collective imagination.

It is in this context that we can fully appreciate two of the museum's main educational initiatives: *Anna de la llana* [Woollen Anna], and *Fem tapís!* [Let's make a tapestry!].

Woollen Anna and her learning suitcase.

Discovering the world of tapestry in Early Childhood Education

In 2009, the MTC's educational service undertook to create an educational resource especially for Early Childhood Education. The initiative reflected a desire to bring the heritage of tapestry, and more specifically that of the Catalan Tapestry School, to a wider public, as in the early 2000s it was a subject that had received little attention from the world of museum resources. The ensuing programme was thus designed specifically for children aged 3 to 6 years old, in a formal setting but outside the constraints of the school environment.

In order to generate interest among pupils prior to their discovery of the MTC, the service created a character with whom the children could identify.

Woollen Anna is a puppet created by Anna Roger, based on the findings of a preparatory study by the education team of motivational techniques for children aged 3 to 6 years that could be suited to the subject of a textile art museum. The outcome was the idea of a suitcase with various compartments, in which each differently coloured space would hold a type of tapestry-related



material that could be used to demonstrate the texture, the smell, and the use of the material itself. It was also considered how this idea might be applied to discovering the tapestries of the Catalan Tapestry School.

The learning suitcase connects us with the materials used in making tapestries: wool, cotton, jute, yarn, plastic thread and cardboard, among many others, all of which are present to differing degrees in the works of art displayed in the Museum. To fit with Early Childhood Education curricula and the capacities outlined for the early years of life, the programme prioritises working with these materials and textures in experimental and hands-on learning activities. In terms of curricular content, contemporary tapestry serves as a vehicle for working with the senses, with the wide range of materials, colours and smells it evokes. The intention, therefore, is to take textile art – a concept seemingly unrelated to anything a child might find familiar – and present it on a child's level, decoding it in their eyes and through the prism of their particular interests. This is achieved by focusing largely on the use of the materials, the colours, shapes and textures.

Beyond this, the learning programme includes a tour through the museum space. Prior to this, pupils take part in a preliminary activity at school to



generate interest in the visit based on an intriguing premise: Woollen Anna has lost a suitcase full of objects that must be identified and then delivered to her at the museum.

Teachers are provided with resources on content that will later be discovered in the museum. The entire programme has been developed by the education service of Sant Cugat Museums, and is adapted to the needs of each group and the specific requirements of the teachers involved. The Museum thus offers its services to schools with a view to establishing a synergy that builds mutual benefits.

For a minimal cost (for a box, a puppet, and various materials for the activities), Woollen Anna and her suitcase of surprises has had a significant impact. From February 2009, when the programme was first offered to schools, through to June 2016, requests were received for a total of 73 groups, representing some 1,946 pupils. In terms of educational levels, P5 is the most frequently represented group, with a total of 1,270 pupils, followed at some distance by P3 and P4, with 292 and 271 pupils, respectively. Other groups that have used the resource include first-year primary pupils, with activities tailored to their needs, and teacher training groups that have worked with the concept of the learning suitcase as an example of an educational tool for use in the discovery of heritage with children.



Let's make a tapestry! Working with the education community

Fem un tapís [Let's make a tapestry] is a collaborative initiative set up in 2014 between the Tapestry Museum and local schools to teach students about textile art, encourage hands-on work founded in regional history, and raise greater awareness of local cultural heritage.

Over a period of five months, two teachers from the Joan Maragall primary school in Sant Cugat del Vallès received training in tapestry-making, in order to pass this knowledge on to their students, who would then help the youngest pupils at the school learn the basics of weaving. The initiative is rooted in the philosophy of service-learning: knowledge is passed on from teacher to student, who then presents it to the youngest learners, establishing an effective cooperative learning framework. Just as we help young children to tie their shoelaces, we can also show them how to make basic stitches and knot a tapestry...

The activity arouses the children's interest by teaching them to learn by doing. Theory and practice are inextricably tied, as the art of tapestry-making can only truly be appreciated through the creative process. Indeed, the verb "to make" (in Catalan, "*fer*") is the very essence of the initiative, as reflected in its name: Let's make a tapestry!



This said, the practical aspect of the programme draws on a solid conceptual base. In their training, teachers receive three months' instruction from a tapestry artist in the relevant tools, knowledge and skills, so that they can later pass this on to their students with due rigour and clarity.

Tapestry-making provides a global learning experience. On one hand, it naturally develops hands-on and interactive work, involving fine motor skills. At the same time, it serves to build a specific social environment: as we work on a piece, we relax, find moments for friendly and enjoyable conversation, enhancing our use of language and communication, and incorporating new vocabulary and new ways of expressing ourselves and relating to one another in a world increasingly dominated by the digital technocracy. In addition, the language of mathematics is also very much a part of tapestry.

Ultimately, this is a programme that combines multiple learning activities, and connectivity between areas and subjects, utilising the Museum as a learning environment in close collaboration with schools; these are, after all, two worlds built upon the same concepts of inquiry, dialogue, and building together.

The *Let's make a tapestry!* programme starts at the museum and then moves to the school, so that the initial experience is taken to the school environment and each of the two worlds is equally enriched. To use an apposite metaphor, this approach weaves the two settings, symbolically but also in

practice. Through *Let's make a tapestry!* both the schools and the Museum are contributing to the recovery of a legacy that seemed condemned to oblivion. By a process we could liken to osmosis, the direct involvement of the educational community grows, and in turn leads to a growing desire for knowledge of textile art among society in a wider sense.

Thanks to the wide range of possibilities offered by this artistic heritage endeavour in the field of education, since 2009 the educational service of the Sant Cugat Museums has developed several distinct but complementary initiatives addressed all possible publics, from formal education to groups at risk of social exclusion. Like thread in a loom, these initiatives have woven complicities between the community and the Museum that, though subtle, hold great emotional and affective potential. ●

Charting the memory of textiles: generating activity and knowledge through collaboration between the museum and civil society

by ROSER ENRICH GREGORI
Curator at the Sabadell History Museum

For more than a decade the Sabadell History Museum has been working with a group of retired textile experts on a project that is proving highly successful. The collaboration has seen valuable progress in efforts to catalogue and document the Museum's textile collection, to systematise the body of knowledge on the wool textile production process, to delve into the historical memory of Sabadell as a centre of textile manufacturing, and to launch new initiatives that teach visitors about the significance of the wool textile industry in the evolution of the city.

Sabadell, city of textiles

The manufacturing of quality wool textiles was the main economic activity in Sabadell from the mid-nineteenth century to almost the end of the twentieth. The success of local companies saw the city become the leading centre of wool production in Spain and one of the driving forces behind Catalonia's industrial revolution.

The complex evolution of Sabadell as an industrial centre was reliant on the market success of its textiles. In 1837, the local firm *José Duran y Compañía* became the first manufacturer in Spain to produce what was called *el teixit de novetat*, textiles specifically designed to reflect changing fashions. From this point on, trends and fashions played a decisive role in manufacturing.

Textiles were produced to be sold and to generate profits; each manufacturer put together an attractive sample book to stand out from the competition and increase sales. To assist in the task, companies worked with a *teòric*, an expert in textile theory who oversaw the creation of each year's summer and winter sample books, which presented the creations for the upcoming season.

Once classified and archived, these sample books were of great value to the companies in later seasons, whether for supplying further orders of previous collections or as inspiration for the creation of new samples.



Group of theory experts who made up the *Comissió de Mostraris*. Front, from left to right: Lluís Marquès, Sebastià Serra, Josep Llobet, Roser Enrich (MHS), Lluís Clapers, Manel Borrell and Ramón Vila; back, from left to right: Frederic Gutés, Ricard Sáez, Pere Nogué, Josep Maria Ramoneda, Josep Maria Peret, Josep Cusidó, Joan Carles Miquel, Antoni Ribera, Albert Puigdemívol, Josep Armesto, Antoni Vázquez, Josep Puigdemíbol and Orsini Sotorra. Absent from the photograph is Jordi Marmiñà, one of the founding members. Photograph Carlos Rivera/MHS, June 2014.

The MHS sample book collection

1 ENRICH, Roser, “Els mostraris. Creacions i història del tèxtil sabadellenc”, *Arraona: Revista d’història*, 2012, vol. 33, 4a època, pp. 276-285.
<http://goo.gl/yf1xcT>.

Since the end of the 1980s, one of the mainstays of the Museum’s acquisitions policy has been to increase its collection of sample books from local companies, to offer the broadest possible representation of textiles produced in Sabadell over the last 150 years.

The collection now has more than 4,000 documents of varying types, corresponding to each of the processes and operations involved in the production of a fabric, from conception and design to the completed textile ready for sale.¹ The documents come from more than 30 textile manufacturers based in Sabadell, and cover the period from the latter half of 1857 to the very end of the twentieth century.

Cataloguing the sample books

In 2004, the Museum embarked on the task of cataloguing the collection. A specific collaboration agreement was signed for the purpose with the textile section of the representative body *Agrupacions Professionals Narcís Giralt*, formed primarily by experts in textile theory with extensive experience in the production of national textile firms. The agreement ensured the experience and expertise required for the task, and the *Comissió de Mostraris*, or committee of sample book experts, was given the opportunity to pool its knowledge, which could then be channelled through the Museum, coherently organised and made available to the public.

The committee, which also includes dyers and spinners, has spent more than a decade studying and cataloguing the production records and dye sample books in the MHS collection.

Documentation guidelines

Given the nature of the collection, the committee and the MHS agreed that the most suitable starting point would be to catalogue the general production records.² This was done by creating a template with a series of specific fields that could be used to create an individual file for each volume. As they were completed, the files were then integrated into the Museum's management software, *MuseumPlus*.

As work has progressed to catalogue the production records, efforts have also begun to order and inventory the production specifications, strike-offs, cost projections, order books and other documents, tying them in with the relevant production records where possible. This additional classification is being compiled for companies with the most comprehensive body of records available: *Molins Hermanos*, *Planas y Rosson* and *Garriga Hermanos*.

In 2009, work began on the dye sample books, which required new fields to be added to the existing template. In this case, the bulk of the collection comes from the company *Estruch Tèxtil*.

Dissemination of the textile collection

Following more than a decade of research and documentation, the MHS and the committee of experts have embarked on a series of projects and initiatives designed to foster greater public awareness of the role and significance of the textile industry in the history of Sabadell.

² Volumes used to store the samples listed in the sample book for each season.



Open volumes. Photograph by Isabel Pardo/AHS. April 2016.

1. Wool textile dictionary

It was apparent from the outset of the project that a consensus would be required over the terms used to describe the textile samples. The committee members had backgrounds in a range of specialisations, and each had acquired specific experience at different companies, so a variety of terms were often used to describe a single sample.

The committee periodically reviewed the terms added to individual records, to validate their use and ensure that the same criteria were applied in each case. Once a complete list had been approved, some of the committee members proposed an additional project: the compilation of the *Diccionari de mostres vives* [Dictionary of living samples], in which each textile record would be presented alongside a genuine sample, truly bringing the collection to life.

The textiles were divided into two groups on the basis of their original use: men's or women's attire. After several months gathering together and organising the sample pieces, the committee finally completed the *Diccionari tèxtil llaner* [Wool textile dictionary], which was presented in June 2013. The two volumes, on *llaneria* (woollens, for women's clothing) and *panyeria* (worsted, for men's clothing), are an encyclopaedic guide to the different types of textiles in the Museum's collection, all produced in Sabadell. The city in fact had a particularly diverse textile industry, but wools were the quintessential product and are therefore the dictionary's exclusive focus.



2. Exhibition *Diccionari dels teixits fets a Sabadell* [Dictionary of textiles made in Sabadell]

3 Built by Emili Grau Vallribera, who gave the demonstrations.

4 With assistance from the staff of the Sound and Image Section at the AHS.

The MHS presented its textile dictionary to the public through this temporary exhibition, which was on show at the Museum from 4 September 2014 to 31 May 2015.

This exhibition, curated by committee members Orsini Sotorra Sanmartí, Josep Armesto Beneyto and Frederic Gutés Pujadas, showcased Sabadell's rich and diverse textile production, presenting each textile sample alongside a description of its most notable features. Visitors could read about the fabric itself and the creator behind it, giving them an introduction to the theory involved in the textile design and manufacturing process.

The next area of the exhibition showcased the *Diccionari tèxtil llaner*, which was presented alongside a variety of fabrics produced in Sabadell, grouped according to the garment for which they were intended and further divided into winter, summer and pre-season collections. A projection in the centre of the hall showed the process of textile transformation from raw wool to finished fabric, and scale models of a mechanical warp spooler and loom situated next to the projection³ were used to give a series of real-life demonstrations over the course of the exhibition period.

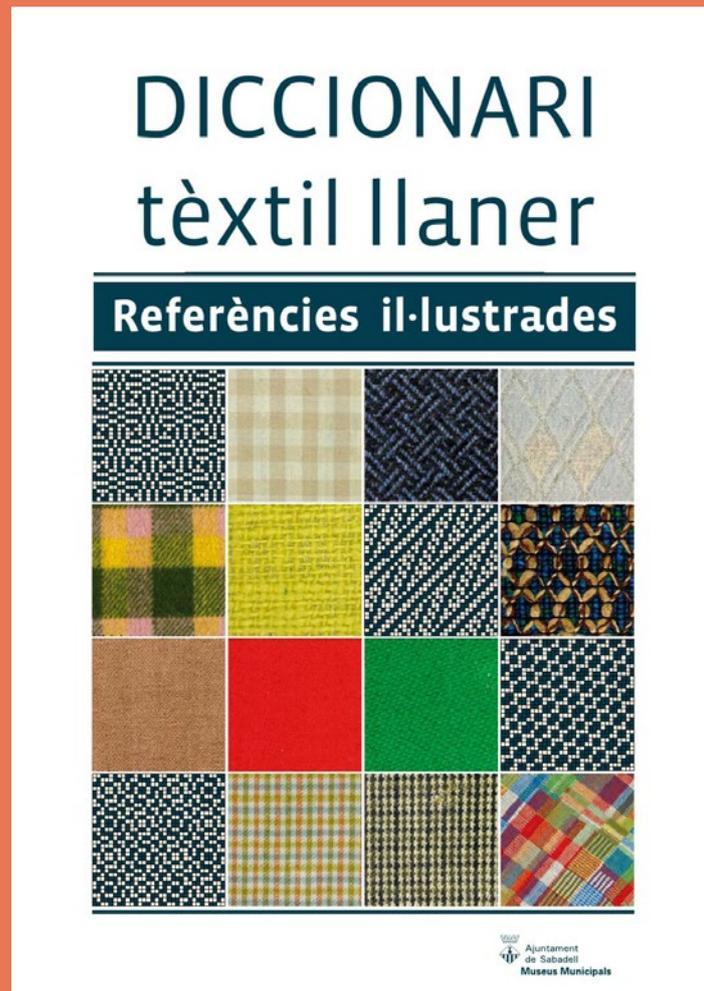
The exhibition concluded with the video presentation *Del be al teixit*, which offered an overview of the wool textile production process.⁴



▲ View of the second hall in the exhibition *Diccionari dels teixits fets a Sabadell*. Photograph by Roser Enrich/MHS. June 2015.

► Detail of a display at the exhibition *Diccionari dels teixits fets a Sabadell*. Photograph by Roser Enrich/MHS. June 2015.





3. Publication of the *Diccionari tèxtil llaner. Referències il·lustrades* [Wool textile dictionary. Illustrated references]

The illustrated dictionary, a single-volume reprint of the two volumes that made up the original dictionary compiled by the expert committee, was presented to the public in December 2015. The first part contains the volume on woollens for women's clothing, in which the samples are categorised according to garment, design and fibre, and further ordered alphabetically within each category. The second part presents the volume on worsteds for men's clothing, where samples are categorised according to their eventual use, then by season, further classified by garment and design, and finally ordered alphabetically. The book is completed by a comprehensive index of terms.

The *Diccionari tèxtil llaner* gathers together the knowledge of a group of professionals with decades of experience at the forefront of wool textile design and manufacturing, the primary activity in Sabadell's economic growth over the years. The book revives the memory of local textile production, rekindling part of the collective memory of a city that owes its importance to this industry, which has left a mark not only on the physical appearance of Sabadell but also on the unique character of its inhabitants. For more than 150 years, textile manufacturing and satellite industries in the textile sector provided employment to the vast majority of the local population.



View of the exhibition
Tints i colorants a Sabadell.
Una història que ve de lluny.
 Photograph by Roser Enrich/MHS.
 February 2014.

4. Exhibition *Tints i colorants a Sabadell. Una història que ve de lluny* [Dyes and colourants in Sabadell. A long history]

Once the 376 volumes of dye sample books from *Estruch Tèxtil* had been catalogued, giving an overview of almost the entire twentieth century, the MHS organised an **exhibition** to disseminate the results of this major research and documentation undertaking, which was open to visitors from September 2013 to mid-April 2014. The exhibition was curated by the dyers Sebastià Serra Rof and Antoni Vázquez Barrera, both members of the Museum's committee of experts.

Dyeing is an important process in the textile industry. The abundance and variety of textile products to emerge from Sabadell over the years owed much to the city's community of dyers, skilled professions professionals whose permanent contact with technicians and manufacturers contributed greatly to the commercial success of articles designed and produced in Sabadell.

A brief accompanying guide was released, and various activities were organised on Sundays during the exhibition period, including the workshop *El blau, de la planta al teixit. Taller de tintura amb anyil natural* [Blue, from plant to textile. Dyeing workshop with true indigo], led by Anna Homs Padrisa, a specialist in the field of natural colourants. A full **catalogue** was also published, which goes into greater detail on the exhibition content and gives an in-depth account of the manufacturers who built the dyeing machinery used in the city.



Photograph 2
Workshop: *El Blau, de la planta al teixit*. Explanations by Anna Homs Padrisa. Photograph by Roser Enrich/MHS. April 2014.
[See more.](#)

Cloenda

The collaborative framework established more than a decade ago has grown in scope and solidity and continues to generate new initiatives. Currently underway is a project to digitise and analyse in greater depth the most important pieces in the sample book collection.

A few months ago, the committee of experts acquired official status under the name *Associació de Professionals i Amics del Tèxtil de Sabadell* [Association of Sabadell textile professionals and friends of textiles], with a view to creating a dedicated wool textile museum that will teach future generations about the history of the wool textile industry in Sabadell and its importance in the life of the city. ●

Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > CATALÀ

The Peniche Bobbin Lace Museum (Portugal)

■ Neus Ribas

In July, the local council of Peniche, a coastal town located 100 kilometres north of Lisbon, announced the opening of the *Museu das Rendas de Bilros* (Bobbin Lace Museum). This new cultural space aims to teach visitors about a craft with a long tradition in the town. Lacemaking in Peniche is thought to date back to the early seventeenth century and the opening of trade routes between Portugal and Flanders, which are described in a number of historical documents. It was in the nineteenth century, however, through the work of the Rainha School of Industrial Design, that the technique was perfected and production reached its peak. By this time, most of the women of Peniche were lacemakers, and it is no coincidence that many of them were the wives of local fisherman; Peniche is a centuries-old fishing port, historically one of the most important in Portugal, and the symbiotic relationship that grew between fishing, sailing and lacemaking calls to mind other traditional centres of lace production, among them Camariñas in Galicia and Arenys de Mar in Catalunya. By the start of the twentieth century, however, the lace industry had fallen into decline, and it was not until 1980 that a revival was sparked, when the local council backed the creation of the School of Bobbin Lace. Since then, Peniche Town Council has run a wide-reaching programme to promote its handmade lace, through international fairs, commercial agreements with designers and advertising campaigns. The opening of the new museum earlier this year can be seen as the culmination of these efforts.

The Bobbin Lace Museum is located on the Rua Marquês de Pombal in the centre of



Peniche, behind the Church of Sant Pere. For the time-being, the Museum is divided into two spaces: a permanent exhibition on the history of lacemaking in the town, and another area for temporary exhibitions. In the permanent exhibition visitors find explanations of the techniques used by the lacemakers of Peniche, designs and finished pieces, sample books, a series of photographs and a summary of recent work to promote the town's handmade lace industry. The temporary exhibition space currently displays some of the designs unveiled at this summer's local fashion shows, events that regularly draw the participation of young designers from the local area.

The creation of the Peniche Bobbin Lace Museum brings a welcome addition to the celebration and promotion of handmade lace, recalling its importance in the town's history and showcasing the singularity of this skilled handcraft. ■

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***Tot Plegat*: a portrait of Catalonia's recent textile past**

Edition by the Terrassa Textile Museum and Documentation Centre (CDMT)

■ Assumpta Dangla

The Circuit of Textile and Fashion Museums of Catalonia has produced the exhibition “*Tot Plegat*: a portrait of Catalonia’s recent textile past”, which was first exhibited at the Arenys de Mar Museum and has since been displayed at the Terrassa Documentation Centre and Textile Museum and the Premià de Mar Textile Printing Museum. The exhibition brings together pieces from the collections of the three museums, taking visitors on a journey through the history of Catalonia’s textile industry from 1888 up to the present day. The prize exhibits are the sample books recovered from textile firms across Catalonia, which contain fascinating examples of finished fabrics, print designs, spun threads, ribbon and knits.

The textile sample books are living testimony of each company’s output and contain a surprising variety of materials, making them versatile tools not only for maintaining internal records but also for marketing purposes. The exhibition catalogue reflects this versatility by looking at the many different aspects of the textile industry, starting with an illustration of the production environment itself. The exhibits chart the evolution of textile design from the celebration of the 1888 Universal Exhibition in Barcelona, present the main manufacturing centres in regions or cities across Catalonia, and showcase the very latest developments and trends in the sector.

The director of the CDMT, Sílvia Carbonell, provides an exhaustive account of the different types of sample books conserved at the participating museums, unique objects that bring us “memories from the mills”. She highlights the great variety of fabric samples in the collection,



behind which are numerous stories from a shared social and historical context, shedding light on many individual and collective adventures in the history of each manufacturer. Carbonell also presents the project “Documentation and diffusion of the Catalan textile industry collection”, which laid the foundations for an online database that currently holds the details of more than 1000 textile samples.

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Jordi Maluquer de Motes, a historian from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, looks at the emergence and consolidation of the Catalan textile industry through a statistics-based analysis of the particular growth model of its factories, focusing on new economic data for the period from 1995 to the present day. Dr Sílvia Rosés, meanwhile, discusses the importance of museum collections as an essential resource for designers, focusing on their fundamental role in research and knowledge transfer and their value as a source of inspiration for contemporary design. Finally, Ariadna Detrell

and Sergi Artigas, from AEI Tèxtils and the Leitat Technological Center, respectively, analyse the role of research and development in the textile sector over the course of its development and present new trends and recent developments stemming from Catalonia's commitment to research-intensive progress.

Tot Plegat invites the public to reflect on a series of aspects, discussed in detail and clearly presented, that are essential to understanding reality of the contemporary Catalan textile industry from the broadest possible perspective. ■

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Exhibition

Dressing and undressing bodies. Phenomenologies of appearance

Can Marfà, Knitted Fabrics. Mataró Museum
15 July–18 December 2016

■ Oriol Ocaña, co-curator

We dress and undress every day. Dressing forms part of our daily routine and is linked to some of our most basic needs. Over the last decades, while the fashion industry has become one of the defining economic phenomena of modern capitalism, in the public consciousness it is increasingly linked to the banality of consumer culture. But beyond strictly instrumental questions and the relevance of its productive and economic dimension, clothing also plays a crucial role in the relationships between bodies in their appearance in public space: the common world that Hannah Arendt understood as the purest expression of political space, where each of us observes and is observed and – through this relationship constructs who we are.

It is this performative dimension of fashion that forms the basis of the exhibition ‘Dressing and undressing bodies. Phenomenologies of appearance’, which presents works by designers and artists who use clothing to reflect on the dressed body and its symbolic potential. The exhibition is structured in five areas of meaning that articulate the forms with which clothing, our second skin, activates different readings of our bodies.

Design has become a key phenomenon in placing concern for our appearance at the centre of productive, symbolic and political activity. As Boris Groys explains, a new field of action has been established: self-design. On the dressed body, clothing projects a formal and symbolic reality over the living essence. The first area of the exhibition addresses the ‘constructed body’, in reference to the performative capacity with which clothing endows the body: the projection of



Un nosaltres impersonal, Laura Puigdemívol.
Photograph by Laura Fernández Antolín.

structures and forms by which it is rationalised, stratified or inserted into new conceptual relationships.

Elsewhere, the body has historically been the target of the most sophisticated forms of control, designed to subject and restrain. This control has been particularly bloody in the case of non-normative, functionally diverse and vulnerable bodies, and with the female body. The power relations that affect us project on the body a series of ideological, economic and technological discourses, and clothing is one of the many mechanisms into which these discourses can be introduced. In response, the fashion and art worlds have proposed ways in which these alienating or oppressive processes can be revealed or rethought. The area ‘political body’ focuses on such proposals, which take clothing as the basis for reflection on the mechanisms of control or suggest alternative mechanisms.

The area on the ‘wounded body’ address an age-old symbolic relationship, between the act of dressing and protection. The body, a dynamic vital

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reality in a constant state of exposure, is configured from multiple experience and relationships. Particularly meaningful among these, for their bearing on the construction of subjectivities, are certain experiences that can be considered traumatic and which leave their mark on the body: visible or invisible wounds that remind us of the body's fragility and its capacity for regeneration. The garments exhibited in this area speak to personal and universal wounds, in search of healing or understanding.

The dressed body, then, is relational in two senses: it is both constituted by the inseparable relationship between the body and clothing and engaged in a permanent relationship with other bodies in a common space. Due to its public dimension, which entails constant social interaction, the body is vulnerable to the effect of these relationships and to the forces by which it is

ruled and normalised. The situation is such that we often need to protect ourselves, disappearing from the material spaces of visibility to preserve our singularity. The exhibits in the area on the 'absent body' are responses to the disappearance of the body or reflections on its relationship with clothing.

These relationships, however, do not apply only to bodies. The body always exists in a given space relative to other non-human agents, and the final area of the exhibition deals with the notion of the 'expanded body', in the sense that the body is connected to stimuli that shape its reality and can often expand its possibilities. The pieces on display invite us to reflect on the links between body and space, objects and others, exploring the awareness of our own limits and their transgression and how the way we dress can open up relationships with other agents, broaden our capabilities and connect us with other realities, spaces and times. ■

With works by: Ana Laura Aláez, Nora Ancarola, Stéphanie Baechler, Ramon Guillén-Balmes, Isabel Banal, Anna-Sophie Berger, Denys Blacker, María Castellanos, Júlia Coma Vilarasau, Lucía Cuba, David Delfín, Emma Escuer, Pepe Espaliú, Ali Yerdel i Anastasia Pistofidou, Laura Fernández Antolín, Esther Ferrer, Lena Gallovicova, Nadine Goepfert, Rubén Grilo, Enric Majoral, Ana Mir, Txell Miras, Juan Luis Moraza, María Morgui, Juan Muñoz, Peter Pohjola, Maria Palomeras, Miriam Ponsa, Joana Poulastrou, Laura Puigdel·lívol, Mariaelena Roqué, Tea Sirbiladze, Jana Sterbak, Pan Weiju.

Curators: Maia Creus and Oriol Ocaña

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Embroidered indulgence

MERCÈ LÓPEZ

Charles F. Worth

MARC PLATA

46 years of history at the Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art.

A successful synergy of education and industry

SILVIA JAPKIN

The pursuit of the new.

Textile print designers (1850-1900)

ASSUMPTA DANGLA

The unsustainability of fast fashion

SUSANNA TOBOSO

Almagro lace: one hundred years of handcraft

MARIA GREIL

Dressing the theatre. The collections at the Museum of the Performing Arts

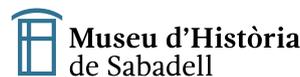
CARME CARREÑO AND LAURA ARS RICART

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