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Joana Valls: the echo of modernity

by LAURA CASAL-VALLS
PhD in Art History and a specialist in fashion history

1 CARBONELL, S.;
CASAMARTINA, J. *Les fàbriques i els somnis: modernisme tèxtil a Catalunya*, Textile Museum and Documentation Centre, Terrassa, 2002, p. 373 and in the catalogue *Barcelona Alta costura*, CASAMARTINA, Josep, *Barcelona Alta Costura*, El Triangle Postals, Sant Lluís, 2009, p. 24.

2 SOLER, Francesc, (Serafí Pitarra), *Lo trinch de l'or: comedia en quatre actes* (1884), Barcelona, Imp. Salvador Bonavía, 1911, p. 20.

3 OLLE, Narcís, *La Febre d'Or* (1890-1892, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1980, p. 142.

At the end of the nineteenth century, arts and crafts experienced a remarkable revitalization in Catalonia. Fashion was a key element in this revival, and around it a new business model developed. However, we still lack studies of the protagonists of this trend, most of whom were women. Joana Valls, for example, was a leading fashion designer in late nineteenth-century Barcelona, but very little is known about her today.

Probably one of the main reasons for our neglect of Joana Valls is the fact that hardly any of her creations have come down to us. Art history tends to base its discourse on the presence of objects: art historians may talk of anonymous objects, but they rarely speak of creators without a legacy; it seems that it is difficult to recognize the work or the skill of someone of whom only the shadow remains. However, judging from the testimony of her contemporaries, Joana Valls enjoyed real prestige among the Catalan elites.

The recent discovery of one of her pieces offers a good opportunity to devote an article to this unjustly ignored creator of fashion and to shed some light on her achievements.

Joana Valls (1855-1935)

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Barcelona had been establishing itself as a European capital. Among the new professions which emerged inside its new commercial framework, driven largely by the needs of the affluent middle-classes, were the designers of luxury fashions.

Joana Valls was one of these first creators and one of the most recognized and respected in Barcelona at the turn of the nineteenth century. There are very few references to her in the panorama of Catalan historiography¹ but some representative testimonies remain in the form of literary images. For example, in 1884 Serafí Pitarra mentioned her as a renowned designer of hats in a play that premiered in that year². There is also a brief but illustrative reference to her in *La Febre d'Or* by Narcis Oller:

“— And how stylish you look! What lovely hats! Are they by Joana Valls? I always say you are the best dressed girls in all Barcelona!”³



Silk shoulder cape, c. 1900, by Joana Valls (no. 131588, Design Museum). This piece was made entirely by hand, in gauze silk satin and embroidered tulle, with tatting applique. The front opening is constructed to open as two flaps, or lapels ([See more](#)). The gauze flounces give the cape considerable movement. A highly intricate piece. © Barcelona Design Museum. Estudio Rafael Vargas, 2015

⁴ NADAL, Josep Maria de, *Recuerdos de medio siglo. Siluetas y perfiles barceloneses*, Madrid, Ediciones Cid, 1957, p. 12.

⁵ VALERO, Juan, *Guide illustré de l'exposition universelle de Barcelone en 1888, de la ville, de ses curiosités et de ses environs*, Barcelona, G de Grau, p.157. See also: *Exposición Universal de Barcelona 1888: Catálogo Oficial*, Barcelona: Imprenta de los Sucesores de N.

Ramírez y Cia, 1888, p. 93.

⁶ AMCB, Registry of births, book 1, 1855, n. Registry 986.

⁷ *La Vanguardia*, 7 October 1919.

Years later Joaquim M. Nadal i Ferrer, in his *Recuerdos de medio siglo*, also mentions the dressmaker: “the marchioness of Mariana, with one of those large hats adorned with *aigrettes* and feathers, created by Juana Valls, which were the admiration of many ladies and the envy of many more”.⁴ Although these literary fragments refer to hats, we know that Joana Valls also created dresses – though the only testimony we have today is a silk cape.

Valls was the only Catalan designer to participate in the Universal Exhibition of 1888, at the Pavilion of Industry, where she exhibited various creations and the exhibition guide stated that “la réputation de cette maison à Barcelone est suffisamment établie pour que les élégantes étrangères puissent s'y diriger en toute confiance”.⁵ This gives us an idea of the significance of Joana Valls in the Barcelona of the time.

Joana Valls was born in Barcelona on March 6, 1855⁶ and was christened Francisca Juana Maria del Pilar Giralt Miró. Probably she adopted the surname Valls on marrying Juan Valls Parellada (ca. 1850-1919) in 1869.⁷

Joana was the daughter of Juan Giralt Alemany and Juana Miró Sarcena, owners of a milliner's or children's clothing shop (references have been found to



The Joana Valls label, sewn into the neck of the cape (no. 131588, Design Museum). The use of labels on clothing manufactured in Catalonia dates back to approximately 1875, and can be seen as the designer's stamp of acknowledgement, adding value to the piece. © Laura Casal-Valls, 2015.

8 Even so, on her birth certificate her father's profession is recorded as "tinsmith". AMCB, Registry of births, book 1, 1855, n. Registry 986.

9 SAURÍ, Manuel, *Manual Histórico-topográfico estadístico y administrativo o sea Guia General de Barcelona dedicado a la Junta de Fábricas de Cataluña* (1849) Barcelona: Imprenta y Librería de D. Manuel Saurí, p. 268.

10 *Anuario del comercio, de la industria, de la magistratura y de la administración*, Madrid, Carlos Bailly-Baillière, 1881, p. 693 and *Anuario del comercio, de la industria, de la magistratura y de la administración*, Madrid, Carlos Bailly-Baillière, 1882, p. 700.

11 In 1881 Juan Valls appears as the owner of a hatmaker's shop and of an establishment of dressmakers, classified as rate I, class 3, with a quota of 65 pesetas for the first activity and 162.50 for the second.

ACA, Hisenda, Matrículas Industriales, 1881-1882, inv. 1, n. 16503.

12 *Anuario del comercio, de la industria, de la magistratura y de la administración*, Madrid, Carlos Bailly-Baillière, 1884, p. 804.

13 ACA, Hisenda, Matrículas Industriales, 1883-1884, inv. 1, n. 16513.

both specialities) located in c/ Avinyó in Barcelona. So costume design appears to have run in the family.⁸

Joana Valls worked in Barcelona from the 1880s until 1921. She was therefore a contemporary of renowned designers such as Maria Molist, also known as Maria de Mataró, Ana Renaud and Montagne.

It is likely, therefore, that the designer began her career continuing the family business. In fact, 1849 a Juana Giralt is recorded as a designer at c/ Avinyó 18;⁹ this may have been the mother of Joana Valls, under the surname of her husband. In 1863, at c/ Avinyó 1, Juan Giralt was registered as the owner of a "fashion shop". In 1881 and 1882 at the same number, Juan Valls also appears as dedicated to 'fashion',¹⁰ which suggests that at first the business was in the name of husband.¹¹ The business was still running in 1884, when the name of Joana Valls appears at c/ Ferran 34.¹² In the industrial registry the establishment was classified as "a fashion designer's shop making luxury dresses and clothes".¹³ In 1885 both shops were registered under the name Joana Valls.¹⁴ During the years 1896 and 1897 Joana Valls Parellada was based at c/Ferran 34,¹⁵ first floor, where she had a "luxury fashion design establishment"¹⁶ and she remained there in later years.¹⁷ From this period a photograph survives (although unfortunately we cannot publish it here) showing the front of the building; on the first floor balcony there is a sign, probably made of glass, where it says "Modas Juana Valls". In fact, the tariff at which the dressmaker was registered allowed her to have signs outside, unlike others.¹⁸ In 1910 she moved to 34 Passeig de Gràcia,¹⁹

14 *Anuario del comercio, de la industria, de la magistratura y de la administración*, Madrid, Carlos Bailly-Baillière, 1886, p. 764.

15 At this address we also find other dressmakers such as Madame Berbegier and Fanny Ricot.

16 ACA, Hisenda, Matrículas Industriales, 1896-1897, inv. 1, n. 16592.

17 ACA, Hisenda, Matrículas Industriales, 1897-1898, inv. 1, n. 16614; 1905, inv. 1, n. 9642; 1906, inv. 1, n. 9646; 1907 inv. 1, n. 9648; 1908, inv. 1, n. 9652; 1909 inv. 1, n. 9648.

18 *Contribución industrial y de comercio. Reglamento y tarifas aprobadas por Real orden de 13 de julio de 1906 anotados y seguidos de un índice alfabético por la Redacción de la Revista de los tribunales y de la legislación universal*. Madrid: Centro Editorial Góngora, 1906, p. 149.

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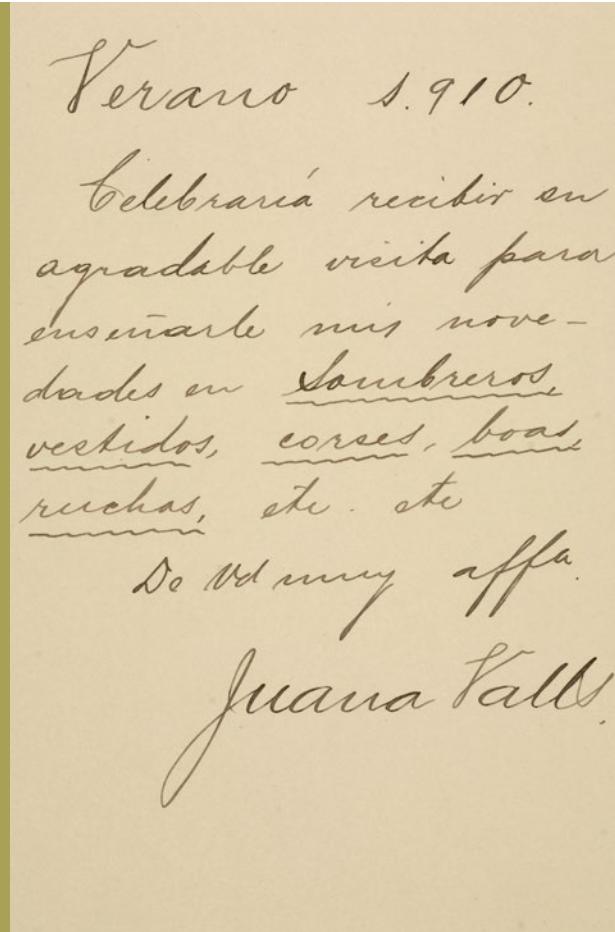
Casa Juana Valls

Fernando VII. 34 pral

Barcelona.

Front of an invitation card given by Joana Valls, showing the designer in a fashionable pose, although in a far more conventional style than seen on the invitations of many of her contemporaries. Given that the card dates from 1910, at the height of the *modernista* period, the image hints at a certain distance from current trends. It was in 1910 that Valls moved her fashion house to Passeig de Gràcia, so it may well be that this was one of the last invitations from her previous premises in Carrer Ferran.

Carrer Ferran 34 was home to a number of different enterprises, including the Parera i Peix fashion house, and the renowned Matorrodona photographic studio, which, together with Joana Valls, occupied the first storey of the building. © National Library of Catalonia. Barcelona.



Reverse of the handwritten invitation, 1910. The card provides an insight into the types of clothing sold by the company: hats, dresses, corsets, boas and frills. © National Library of Catalonia. Barcelona.

¹⁹ ACA, Hisenda, Matrículas Industrials, 1910, inv. 1, n. 9661.

²⁰ *La Publicidad*, n. 7970 (1900), p. 1.

²¹ *Los debates: diario político defensor de los intereses de la comarca*, n. 3644 (1905), p. 3.

²² These advertisements give us an idea of the type of employees who worked there (hatmakers, seamstresses, and so on) and so we can deduce the type of products made.

the new centre of trade in luxury goods in Barcelona, probably as a commercial strategy.

Valls built up her business as an important fashion house. Established independently, it became one of the leaders of elegance in Barcelona. We know that her workshop had a library or collection of fashion books and figurines, among them Puiggrá's *Monografía histórica e iconográfica del traje*, and plates from the *Album Rêve* and other publications which she probably received on subscription. Some of these plates bear the designer's stamp.

The products sold by the firm had a reputation for quality and fashion and were aimed at a clientele with a high purchasing power, as shown in the following excerpt: "How much will I have to pay, more or less? – We're not going to argue about that... as you know, the stitching, you know, eight *duros*; the adornments, twenty-five; the linings, the *serrapollera*, buttons, the rods, the brush and so on, five or six. In all, it won't be more than fifty *duros* – Come on, it's not as if it's by Joana Valls!"

An advertisement for the firm El Mechero de Venus suggests that Joana's establishment was very luxurious and had gas lighting: "The best lighting at the theatres Novedades and Tivoli, in the elegant salons of the dressmaker Joana Valls, in the Old England and in the best establishments."²⁰

In fact, the designer's popularity spread beyond the city of Barcelona. In the press we find dressmakers who advertised their skills saying they had worked at the workshop of Joana Valls.²¹ Her firm grew rapidly over the decades and placed advertisements for employees at times when there was more work.²²



Plates adquired by Joana Valls.
Album Rêve, Paris, at the
beginning of 1900.
©CDMT Quico Ortega.



23 *La Vanguardia*, 7 October 1905, p. 2.

24 *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 1918.

25 Probably, the constant contact with the bourgeoisie of the time, and a substantial economic capacity, made luxury dressmakers into ladies of a certain culture and refinement. We know, for example, that Joana Valls bought two paintings by Roig i Soler (Sala, Lluïsa. "Joan Roig i Soler. Llibreta de comptes (1881 - 1908). MS.3023 Biblioteca de Catalunya-Estudis i transcripció", *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi*, n. 15 (2001), p. 151-225) and she had a painting by Ramon Casas in her workshop, which was embargoed on the occasion of the closure of the banks in October 1899. This episode has been studied in detail in the article: Casal-Valls, L. & Sánchez Sauleda, S. "El taller d'una modista embargat: Joana Valls, el Tancament de caixes i l'obra de Ramon Casas", *Butlletí de la Societat Catalana d'Estudis Històrics* (forthcoming).

26 *La Veu de Catalunya*, 22 October 1919, p. 7.

27 ACA, Hisenda, Matrícules Industrials, 1920-1921, inv. 1, n. 9759.

28 AMCB, Registry of deaths 1935, book 732, registry no. 766. See also: *La Vanguardia*, 1 May 1935 and *La Vanguardia*, 9 May 1935.

The type of products they sold were varied, as shown in the advertisement appeared in *La Vanguardia* in 1905:

"To carry out a complete renewal of our stocks, we are selling at considerable discounts our current stocks of coats, velvet, woollens, embroidery, tulle, gauze, trimmings, flowers, feathers, ribbons, braids of all kinds, adornments and everything related to dressmaking."²³

In 1915 the firm sought a director of dressmaking, a post that remained in 1918.²⁴ The existence of this position indicates that the business had grown considerably and that it was Joana Valls who managed the business and was no longer a seamstress sewing with her own hands. Her figure, then, clearly reflects the change in the profile of these professionals, who rose from anonymity to run important businesses.²⁵

In 1919 Valls announced her retirement, and a brief chronicle was published praising her achievements:

"One of the aspects that affirms the capital status of Barcelona is our intense artistic life, and (...) highlights everything that is related to ladies' fashions, which have reached such a high level, giving us a well-deserved reputation. One of the most solid reputations and most grounded in Barcelona is undoubtedly that of Joana Valls (...) we deeply regret the departure of the great dressmaker Joana Valls, who has contributed so much with her taste to elevating the craft of fashion."²⁶

In 1920-1921 we find her name in the industrial registry for the last time.²⁷ Her business, which had acted as a sounding board of modernity in the 1880s and 1890s, probably went into decline in the early decades of the new century, with the emergence of a new generation of creators, such as Anita Monrós (1882-1959) and Pedro Rodriguez (1895-1990), among others. Joana Valls died in Barcelona on April 30, 1935²⁸ leaving behind her testimony of change. ●

The Textile Museum and Documentation Centre, a brief account of a long and unknown history

by EULÀLIA MORRAL ROMEU
Photographs: ©CDMT and Quico Ortega

Early years: The Biosca Textile Museum

1 Copy of the deed of sale. CDMT archive.

2 Correspondence between J. Biosca and F. Torrella, 1950–1951; Algunos datos sobre el Museu Textil Biosca. Typed document, unsigned, dated March 1969. CDMT archive.

3 Museo Provincial de Tarrasa: resumen de datos sobre el Museo. Typed document, undated and unsigned. CDMT archive. Handwritten notes on visitor numbers and museum expenditure, 1947–1958. CDMT archive.

The institution we know today as the *Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil*, or CDMT, has its origins in a small industrial warehouse at Carrer Sant Isidre, 6, in Terrassa, where Josep Biosca Torres chose to house a collection of historical fabrics and costumes he had acquired from Ignasi Abadal. The purchase, for the sum of 500,000 pesetas, was funded by profits from the company AGILESA-ETSA and completed on 21 February 1946¹. According to the inventory supplied with the deed of sale, the collection consisted of 680 individual items and 1,860 card-mounted fabric samples. Most of the items were European in origin, dating from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, while a small number of older pieces from Egypt were also included.

Following Abadal's death, his son-in-law Josep Llussà announced the sale of a second group of items from the same collection, courting several potential buyers. Biosca, who appears to have been a shrewd negotiator, outmanoeuvred his rivals and, in March 1951, closed the deal that would expand his private museum with 1,330 new pieces. Documents from the period held in the CDMT archive² do not record the sum that was paid for this second acquisition, but they do confirm that the pieces were identical in nature to the first group, and that some were duplicate items. Biosca had planned to exchange exhibits with other museums in Europe, although the idea ultimately proved unsuccessful.

In 1953, the first board of trustees of the Biosca Textile Museum was created, and the museum was installed in the central part of the building housing the Terrassa Industrial Institute – the former Pasqual Sala warehouse located at Carrer St. Pau, 6. The Institute made a substantial contribution to the installation and maintenance costs.

The museum was formally opened to the public in January 1956, although handwritten notes by Dr Torrella confirm that private visits had been arranged since as early as 1947.³

From 1956 onwards there are reports of numerous activities organised by the museum, from the "Exhibition of selected works of Textile Art from the



4 From a signed record by José Cristófol Freixa, secretary of Edificaciones Textiles S.A., referring to the company's extraordinary general meeting in Madrid on 21 December 1958. CDMT archive.

collections of the museums of Catalonia”, installed in the Casa Soler i Palet (November–December 1956), to a display of selected pieces from the Biosca collection at the Biosca gallery in Madrid, owned by a brother of Josep Biosca, and a special exhibit at the Barcelona trade fair in 1957.

Not everything was wine and roses, however, and in late 1958, AGILESA-ETSA, “*recognising the need to resolve the museum’s situation permanently, given that its holding by the company carried serious responsibilities (...) and would no doubt demand considerable sacrifices in the future*”,⁴ agreed to hand control to the city of Terrassa. The offer was made on the condition that the City Council assume all of the costs and award the Industrial Institute an active role in the management of the museum, in acknowledgment of the investments made during the period it had housed the collection on its own premises. The City Council accepted the terms, and approval was announced in a plenary meeting on 17 April 1959. In September 1960 a new board of trustees was created, chaired by the mayor of Terrassa and formed by a variety of members including representatives of textile firms and municipal organisations, and the Museo Municipal Textil Biosca was born.

Spatial constraints and the stubbornness of Biosca – who had influential political contacts – placed pressure on the City Council to provide a new home for the museum. The decision was eventually taken to use a site opposite the Castle of Vallparadís, and on 15 December 1963 the president of the Provincial Council of Terrassa, the Marquis of Castell-Florite, and the mayor of Terrassa,



▲ The president of the Provincial Council, Josep Buxó, and the mayor of Terrassa, the signatories to the agreement for the creation of the new Provincial Textile Museum.

► Facade of the new building, designed by Camil Pallás, the architect at the Provincial Council.



Josep Clapés, agreed to join forces to create a new museum. The city would cede the land and its collections in perpetuity, and the Provincial Council would curate the [Viñas Collection](#) and transfer it to the new institution. By 1964 the architectural plans were ready, and work was completed in 1969, making way for the unveiling of the new museum on 14 June 1970.



Eighteenth-century cape, in embroidered velvet, from the Moragas Collection.
CDMT 07239.

The Provincial Textile Museum

The new building provided the space to house the textile collections held by the City and Provincial councils. Thus, the original pieces assembled by Biosca were joined by two collections acquired from the City Council (the Moragas Collection, comprising 78 items of clothing from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the Garcia Capafons Collection, formed by 860 pieces of *passmanterie* covering the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century) and by the Viñas Collection, purchased by the Provincial Council from the industrialist Ricard Viñas Geis, which comprised 2,661 fabric samples and 442 examples of *passemanterie* dating from Late Antiquity through to the end of the nineteenth century, together with oriental fabrics and a series of documents and decrees from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries.

Management of the museum was entrusted to a new board of 18 trustees drawn from a public-private corporation: six *ex officio* members (the president of the Provincial Council of Terrassa, the mayor of Terrassa, two provincial councillors, one city councillor, and the museum's director), eight representatives of the Barcelona and Terrassa chambers of commerce, the Terrassa Industrial Institute, the Col·legi de l'Art Major de la Seda (the institution representing silk industry guilds), Caixa d'Estalvis de Terrassa savings bank, the Manufacturers' Union of Sabadell, the cotton textile industry,

⁵ “The President wishes it to be known that, in light of the fact that until now the financial costs of the Institution have been met almost in their entirety and under the sole responsibility of the Provincial Council, he believes that if the current outlook does not change, the clearest solution may be to manage the museum directly through this Corporation without the intervention of a special entity for the purpose, notwithstanding that a decision must be taken regarding the formula for creating a board with exclusively advisory functions that includes representation of the interested parties (...) and the potential repercussion of the participation of the City Council”. Minutes from the meeting of the board of trustees of the Provincial Textile Museum on 23 February 1981. CDMT archive.

and the Textile Workers’ Mutual Society; and three individual members, Manuel Rocamora, Lluís Garcia Capafons and Carlos Duran Torrens. The role of secretary was held *ex officio* by the secretary of the Provincial Council.

As laid down in the new statutes, the budget for the museum combined subsidies from its two public trustees with additional funding provided by the private trustees. The CDMT archive holds several letters of request or reminder sent to private trustees regarding their annual contributions, as well as receipts that illustrate the gradual decline in private funding over the years, creating a shortfall that was met by the Provincial Council of Barcelona, which increased both its funding and its involvement in the running of the museum. By 1981, under the presidency of Martí Jusmet, the situation had become untenable and the museum was placed under the direct control of the management corporation⁵.

A decade at the forefront of cultural life

Despite the difficulties described above, over the course of the 1970s the Provincial Textile Museum became the preeminent cultural institution of a city sorely lacking in infrastructures of this type. The new museum used a hall on the ground floor for temporary exhibitions that gave it a prominent role in the contemporary art scene throughout the decade, thanks to exhibitions by a number of artists associated with the Catalan School of Tapestry. During this period, the museum hosted 18 individual and collective exhibitions, which received extensive coverage in the media and are still fondly remembered by many people involved in this area of artistic creation.

With this focus on temporary displays, the collection of historical fabrics was relegated to the permanent exhibition halls, while the temporary spaces housed exhibits of paintings, sculptures, engravings, photographs, arts and crafts, and special historical or commemorative collections.

Moving into the 1980s, the Caixa de Terrassa Cultural Centre became the new dominant force in the cultural life of the city, and a variety of new municipal amenities emerged. The opening of the Catalan National Museum of Science and Technology in 1984 saw a definitive shift of the city’s cultural centre towards the Rambla d’Ègara, and the Provincial Textile Museum, which lacked the financial muscle and the technical expertise to promote new projects or major exhibitions, was gradually reduced to hosting smaller touring exhibitions supported by the Provincial Council or Caixa de Terrassa.

Despite this changing role, the Provincial Textile Museum continued to build its collection through private donations and a series of acquisitions (the



Exhibition of tapestries from the Catalan school.

Suqué and Tove Alm collections of Egyptian textiles and the Tórtola Valencia Collection of European, Oriental and Latin American fabrics), in addition to a major transfer from the Provincial Council of 1,275 items of clothing and accessories dating from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, originally bequeathed by the artist Lluís Tolosa Giralt. The halls on the second floor of the museum were renovated in 1985 to accommodate the new pieces, many of which were installed in large glass cabinets that presented the collection in spectacular fashion, though they also caused numerous difficulties of conservation.

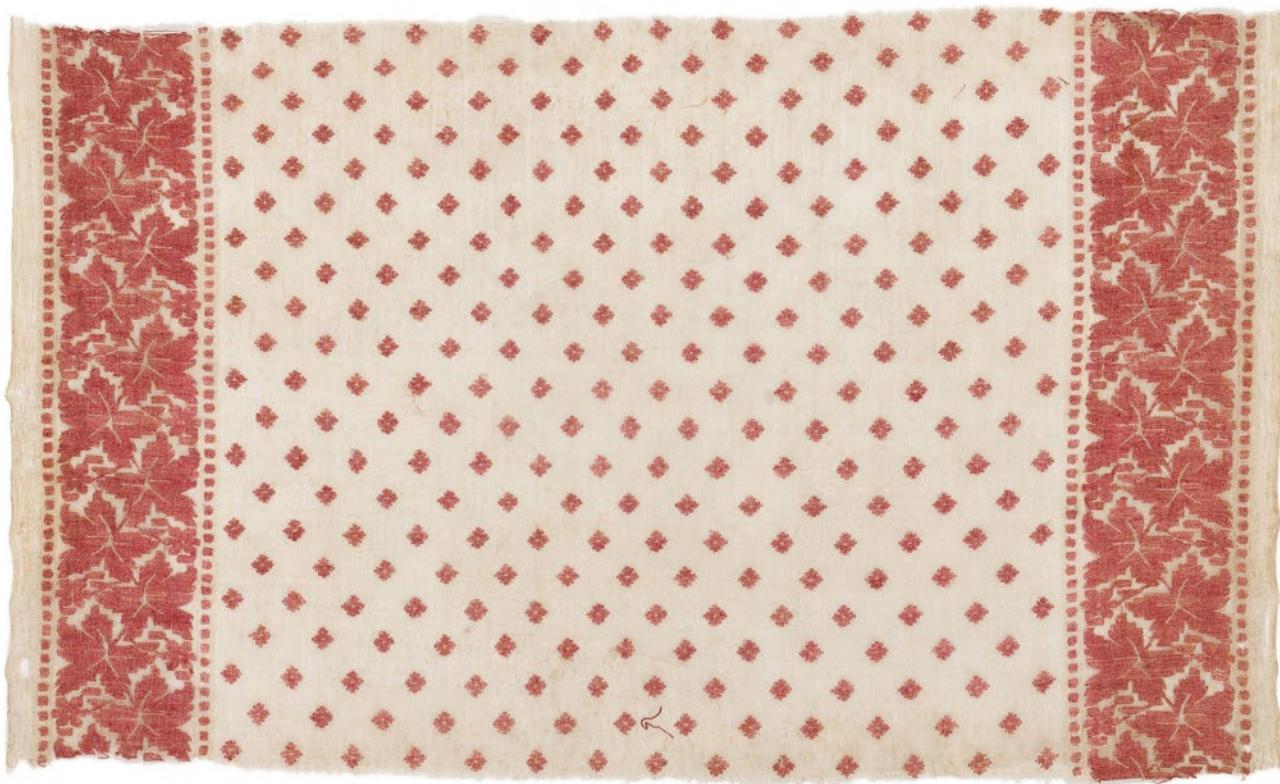
⁶ Textile Museum. Terrassa: Future guidelines, an initial approach (August 1987) and Plans for the refurbishment of the Textile Museum (March 1988). CDMT archive.

By the end of the decade the museum's model had run its course. The influence of European museology and museography had grown dramatically during the last years of the Franco regime, thanks in no small part to the work of the Assembly of Museum Staff of Catalonia, and the Provincial Council needed to update its museums. Terrassa posed a unique challenge, since although the museum was located in one of the most important textile cities in Catalonia, its collection included very few examples of local textile production. As such, was there sufficient justification for keeping the museum open?

This question sparked a radical transformation⁶, approved by the Provincial Council and ratified by the International Council of Museums, which entailed scaling back conventional museum activities and focusing instead on a new dynamic as a documentation centre and specialised service provider to the local population and textile sector.



Silk gown decorated with religious imagery, bequeathed by Lluís Tolosa. CDMT 11573.



Brocaded muslin cloth from India, from the Tótola València Collection. CDMT 7761.

A new model for a new context

The transformation of the Provincial Textile Museum addressed three areas: concept, space and management. The new concept was clear; the centre would operate less as a traditional museum and more as a hub for a range of key services, making its resources available to the textile and fashion industries to support the creation of new designs, and seeking greater involvement in the work of local industry stakeholders, which generate wealth for the region through the knowledge and experience acquired over centuries of textile production in Terrassa. Heritage is the warp that gives consistency, the structure through which the weft of innovation is threaded, thus the fundamental mission of a centre like the CDMT must be to preserve the national textile heritage. To achieve this, it was necessary to prioritise the collection, conservation and diffusion of the materials that chart the industrial history of Catalonia, before they were irretrievably lost.

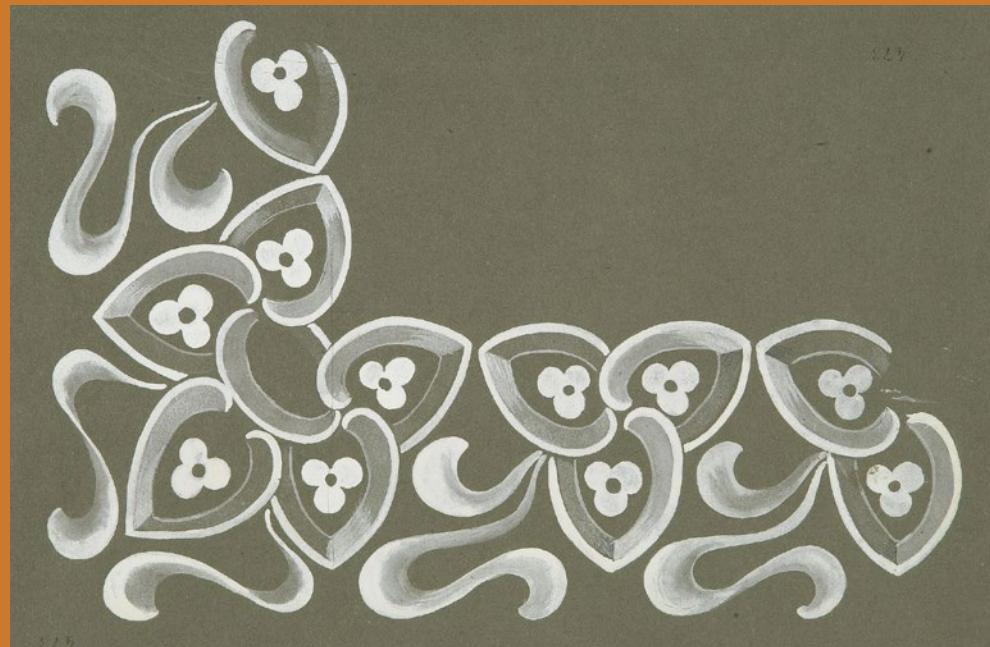
The public consortium set up to manage the museum in January 1995 brought a more dynamic management structure and reinstated the municipal representation that had been lost in 1981. Renovation work, however, had yet to be started and would take some 14 years to complete, during which time the museum remained open to the public. Finally, in December 2002, the CDMT as we know it today was officially inaugurated, with modern facilities better suited to the conservation of its collections, a new conservation workshop and library, interactive learning spaces, a conference room, and temporary exhibition halls.

Between 1990 and 2011 the museum devoted most of its efforts to [temporary exhibitions](#)⁷, which entailed constant documentation and the study, conservation and exhibition of work in specific styles. This approach brought considerable advances in the scientific and historical understanding of textiles

⁷ Between 1990 and 2014 the museum hosted a total of 63 temporary exhibitions, 20 of them curated by its own staff, eight organised in conjunction with other museums, and 35 brought from outside Spain (25 by contemporary designers and artists, and ten by other organisations). Of the exhibitions created by the museum, five were also shown at various museums across Catalonia. The exhibits themselves form the basis of 22 publications.

► Original design on paper, probably from the study of Gràcia i Ferrater, dating from 1908/1910. CDMT 15000 (1)-860.

▼ "Banderes" (samples of the same fabric in different colour combinations) from the Felipe Iglesias silk firm, 1915/1930. CDMT 20018.



► Worsted manufactured by Textil Vallhonrat, Terrassa (1930/1939). CDMT 15135-045 (084-1421).



Cotton sample, Algodonera
Canals. Barcelona, 1955.
CDMT 11228-010 (086-546).



and was successful in attracting and establishing stronger links with new visitors not traditionally drawn to the textile industry. Unwavering support from the Provincial Council of Barcelona, under the presidency of Manuel Royes, enabled the CDMT to make dramatic qualitative improvements, bringing it to greater prominence on the European cultural scene, opening the doors to participation in collaborative projects with institutions in other countries, and creating a more favourable environment for specialised services such as documentation, restoration and training, as well as the design of official curricular workshops for schoolchildren in the region.

Today, the CDMT forms part of a network with the Marès Lace Museum in Arenys de Mar and the Textile Printing Museum in Premià de Mar. It is also actively involved in collaboration agreements with Catalan universities (the UPC, UAB and UB), the schools of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage of Catalonia and Madrid, the textile industry (Texfor), and research organisations including the Centre for Historical Studies of Terrassa (CEHT) and the Grup d'Estudis Precolombins (GEP).

Much of the CDMT collection (in excess of 120,000 items) can be viewed [on line](#), as can the specialist library catalogue, through the Consortium of Academic Libraries of Catalonia (CBUC), and the [rare books and manuscripts collection](#), much of which has been integrated into the “Digital Memory of Catalonia”, a cooperative, open-access repository managed by the CBUC.



▲ Storage 1, containing floor textiles.

► Storage 6, containing clothing and large-format textiles.





Storage 5, with sample-books.



Conservation workshop. [See more.](#)



Library.

The CDMT is now more widely known for its industrial heritage and for Catalan *modernisme* than for the historical collections that formed the basis of the original institution. These older pieces retain a certain importance, and have an encyclopaedic value as learning tools and as a source of inspiration for industrial design, but similar collections can now be found in many other museums around the world; it is the industrial archives and *modernista* collections – clothing, accessories, household items, original designs – that most strongly root the CDMT in the surrounding region and local community.

Looking to the future

Heritage centres cannot work in isolation from the world around them; we must be able to evolve in response to new demands, particularly at a time when such demands are more numerous (and more contradictory) than ever. The intrinsic balance of conservation and public accessibility must now be reconciled with the demand to offer more (exhibitions, school workshops, longer opening hours, greater availability for consultation...) for less (free or at minimal cost); as funding falls (in a few short years we have seen our budget cut dramatically), visitors numbers and revenue must increase.

We must acknowledge that heritage is not foremost among our national priorities, and it is perhaps impossible to build the collaborative frameworks and social prestige of institutions in the English-speaking world that we often seek to emulate. A museum, by definition, belongs to society, but this is not to say that it necessarily reaches everyone in that society, whether because it lacks the capacity to attract the public or because the public is simply not interested.



"The modernist-style herbarium", exhibition (2006/2009).

Each country and culture has its peculiarities, and any new policy initiative must face this fact. In Catalonia, there are too many museums and too few visitors; too much investment in new projects and too little money to maintain them. We have a culture of individualism and little willingness to join forces; a tradition of centralism and little experience of working together across the Catalan territory, as beneficial as this would be.

The efforts put into modernising the CDMT over the last few years stemmed from the conviction that both industry and the education system (specifically, schools of fashion and design) could creatively "exploit" the heritage we conserve, yet the results suggest that this has not been the case, or at least not to the extent we had intended. It is also true that we have been unsuccessful as a showcase for industry, a function we believed could be of interest to the sector, to bring its innovations to the public each season. Rather, we have discovered that our "natural" users are the museums of Catalonia, which need assistance with conservation and, above all, with restoration. So although we have had to change our focus in terms of users, we have consolidated our role as a service provider, an activity in which we can be far more sustainable than if we continue to operate as a conventional museum.

We have yet to address several areas in which work should already be well underway: the integration of IMATEX content into a database to make it universally accessible; the design of a specialised and officially recognised teaching syllabus linked to different sectors (textile trade and retail, official vocational training, higher education); the digitisation and computerisation of our photographic and administrative archive; the creation of online teaching resources...

But responsibility for the change of model before us is not in the hands of the CDMT team (which has submitted various strategy proposals since 2007, none of them given serious consideration) and lies squarely with the trustees, since the redesign is necessarily of a political nature. This situation is unavoidable given that the Provincial Council – which has covered 90% of the CDMT's ordinary operating budget until now – intends to withdraw from its commitment and pass it to the City Council, which has had little involvement since the 1980s, despite providing half of the consortium's members since 1995. And while it seemed for a time that the future of the CDMT would be an alliance with Disseny Hub Barcelona (DHUB), more than one administration has been and gone, and the initiative is no longer discussed.

A great deal of work remains to be done, much of it technical, but first a clear decision must be taken at government level regarding the desired role and prominence of the CDMT, both in Terrassa and across Catalonia. This decision must reflect the need to foster relationships with industry and the higher education sector, through which we can leverage our area of specialisation, the only area in which we can be a singular and competitive institution; it must strengthen our ties with the Circuit of Catalan Textile and Fashion Museums, and not with strange “constellations” drawn up in an office in Barcelona; and, harsh as the reality is, it must clearly acknowledge that visitors to museums in Catalonia are overwhelmingly tourists, and Terrassa is not a major destination on the tourist map... ●

Fashion at the Museum. An interpretation of the dress collections at the Design Museum of Barcelona

by TERESA BASTARDES, Head of Collections, Design Museum of Barcelona
and SÍLVIA VENTOSA, Curator of Textiles and Fashion at the Design Museum
of Barcelona

Photographs: ©Design Museum of Barcelona, LaFotogràfica

*“Dress is therefore the most immense modification experienced by man in society;
it weighs on his entire existence”*

Honoré de Balzac

Abstract

The new [Design Museum of Barcelona](#) has opened its doors to the public with four inaugural exhibitions. Among them, *Dressing the body; silhouettes and fashion 1555-2015* provides a critical insight into how the outward appearance of the human shape has been manipulated throughout history, and highlights the absurdity of being a slave to one's own body or to fashion. This reflection takes on special importance in our society in which the personal image plays such a powerful role in the creation of identity and in social communication.

The body and dress

Human beings are distinguished from other animals by a system of verbal communication – language – and by other nonverbal behaviours such as our gestures and the way we present ourselves to the world. Our outward appearance conforms to the canons of beauty, which intentionally alter our natural forms. The obsession with achieving a specific aesthetic ideal has given rise to the invention of exaggerated artefacts to modify the shape of the body.

In today's world, speaking of the body and its modification is in fashion. At the same time, fashion is a key element of the post-industrial society. Changes in appearance and dress are continuous, cyclical, and increasingly accelerated.

According to Elisabeth Wilson (1985), the body is a cultural artifact. Its ornamentation expresses the aesthetics that modify our appearance: hairstyles, makeup, tattoos and alterations in the body, and especially our dress. While the concept of the body has been treated extensively in academic fields, the body in relation to clothing and fashion was largely ignored until the studies published by Joanne Entwistle and Elisabeth Wilson, especially *The Fashioned Body* (Entwistle, 2000) and *Body Dressing* (Entwistle and Wilson, 2001).





Dress is universal; it is a basic fact of social life in all cultures, transmitting information about its wearers and their social class, age, gender, their aesthetic tastes and their intentions: aggression, submission, transgression, seduction and power.

Body and dress are complementary. The content and the container form a symbiosis. Obviously, dress is not self-supporting; it needs a body to support it, but at the same time the body is covered with a dress. The dressed body could be considered as a dynamic relationship, a dialogue between the body, dress, and the social and aesthetic moral codes of an era or culture. In Western society the dressed body is the protagonist of our appearance, which is one of the major concerns of our time.

Furthermore, fashion can be defined as a collective belief that is manifested and becomes visible in clothing. In Western society the dressed body is directed by a system that arbitrarily and periodically introduces changes. Fashion lays down the ornamentation of the human body as the maximum expression of the individual personality to which we add an impersonal feature, the collective style. Fashion is not dress, the seen object, but a set of invisible elements included in the dress that give added value. Dress is what a person wears; it is the transfer of fashion into everyday life.

At different times in history, dress has artificially modified the body shape to create silhouettes and volumes. The silhouette, the visible contour of a dressed body, marks the entire shape of the body and creates its limits with respect to other bodies and to other spaces, either occupied or free. Three silhouettes have recurred consistently over the last few centuries; the straight tubular silhouette, the geometric silhouette with the basic forms of the triangle, the rectangle and the circle, and the silhouette that respects the anatomical shape of the human body.





The concept of the exhibition

Dress modifies the image of the body by compressing it or releasing it. Fashion tends to be cyclical, and over recent history the morphology of dress has gone through five phases: compression of the body from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, release at the time of the French Revolution, compression again in the nineteenth century until the First World War, release in the 1920s and 1930s, compression once more until the 1950s, and a new social revolution in the 1960s which has released the body again until today. This endless variation is the essence of fashion and its arbitrariness.

The main actions exerted by dress on the body are increasing, reducing, elongating, profiling and revealing. Increasing involves creating volume in the arms, shoulders or hips using interior structures or ample rigid fabrics: *tonillos*, petticoats, crinolines and bustles widen the figure. Reducing physically constricts the natural forms of the body, particularly the torso and waist corsets, bodices, bras and belts. Elongating enhances the silhouette to make people seem taller, with stylized heels and platform shoes, hats, dresses with long tails. Profiling outlines the forms of the body without modifying it, with stockings, gloves, shirts and bodysuits. Finally, revealing uncovers parts of the body or suggests the figure with transparent fabrics, dresses, shorts and sleeveless T-shirts.

These effects are achieved in three main ways. First, the choice of fabrics: a flexible material like knitwear fits close to the body, while a rigid fabric like velvet separates the body from the dress. Then, with the techniques of patterning, cutting and sewing, the silhouette of the dress can either cling to the body with the use of darts and folds or be separated using pleats and ruffles or overlapping fabrics, trimmings, and lace. Finally, internal structures, either constraining the body or increasing it, help to give the desired shape: corsets to make the body appear smaller than it is, crinolines and bustles to separate the dress from the body, and brassieres to reduce the bust, leave it as is, or give it volume.



Museography

1 Julia Schulz-Dornburg, exhibition design; Toni Rueda, lighting AAAA Pere Canals and Daniel Pujal, graphic design.

2 The fashion collection of the Design Museum of Barcelona has pieces from all over Western Europe. It centres in particular on Spanish designers from the twentieth century onwards, especially those from the city of Barcelona.

Underlying the exhibition is the idea that presentation is as important as content. Its complex narrative is housed in a setting in which visitors can perceive it and understand it.

The museography converts something *a priori* intangible into something tangible. It is a transversal project involving expert professionals who have brought together their skills in curating, design space (including the display cases and cabinets), lighting, and graphic design¹.

The dresses are the protagonists. The pieces were carefully selected to represent all the materials and techniques used throughout history, but especially to ensure that all silhouettes characteristic of each moment should reflect the five actions that dress performs on the body, in accordance with the underlying concept of the exhibition. It was also decided that as many of the designers represented in the Museum's collection as possible should be chosen for the exhibition²: in all, 50 designers, from the nineteenth century to the present day.

The timeline presents the graphic and textual contents on the walls opposite the display cases. Inside the display cases are the pieces themselves, without any text except for the title and dates that link up with the graphic and textual information.

The exhibition is divided into ten periods. **The first, 1550-1789. The Gentleman and the Courtier. Dresses compress the body**, includes more than two centuries of costumes belonging to the aristocracy, and displays silhouettes that modify the natural lines of the body through the use of the corset and *tonillo*. **1789-1825. Dress and Revolution. The body set free** exhibits tunic dresses that allow the body to move and display itself naturally. Then, over the course of the nineteenth century, in the hands of the new industrial bourgeoisie,





fashion once again exaggerates the woman's body, compressing the torso and narrowing the waist with corsets and widening hips and rear with crinolines and bustles. These modifications of the body are shown in **1825-1845. Ethereal Women. The dress inflates the body**, which presents romantic dresses with rounded skirts and puffed sleeves; **1845-1868. The well-dressed bourgeoisie. Exaggerating volumes**, which increases the skirt with the use of crinolines; **1868-1888. The age of the bustle. What matters is at the back**, shows models that change ever more quickly, obliging continued change; and **1888-1910. "S"-shaped belles; clothes deform the body**, in which women's figures are grossly deformed. The first decades of the twentieth century saw the second major break in the history of fashion. **1910-1930. Clothes reveal the body. Corsets off!** During wartime, women are replacing men in the workforce, and dress become more comfortable, gradually shorter, revealing the legs for the first time in history; the waistline moves down from the chest to the hips. **1930-1960. Haute couture. The artificial silhouette** is a conservative period which returns to the past with narrow waist and wide hips. But the 1960s brought in new currents of freedom, as the younger generations began to impose their aesthetics. Soon designers and the industry adapted to changing times, and the democratization of fashion made it accessible to everyone. **1960-1990. Prêt-à-porter. The body on show.** A variety of silhouettes in comfortable unisex clothes for both women and men; trousers for women, as well as mini and maxi skirts. **1990-2015. Designers versus globalization. Clothes outline, wrap or reveal the body** shows that all the silhouettes are possible: large volumes live alongside minimalist models.

The dresses are arranged in large display cases that resemble rooms with a glass front to protect them from dust and the public. The dresses maintain a dialogue with each other, their similarities and differences enhanced by the display. Two large wall cabinets house the interior structures (corsets, bras and bustles) in an intentionally more abstract arrangement than the dresses. Finally a cylindrical glass cases contains the crinolines.

The lighting design obtains a theatrical effect since only the pieces and graphic information are lit; the visitor remains in darkness. Maintaining levels of 50 lux on the pieces at all times, the windows have a cycloramic background of soft colours. To enhance their volumes, spotlights are focused directly on the



pieces. The lighting reinforces the concept of the exhibition which includes both two-dimensional silhouettes and three-dimensional volumes and uses LED technology to comply with the requirements of conservation (neither infrared nor ultraviolet) and sustainability.

Each cabinet corresponds to a period with particular silhouettes and a particular concept of body modification. To illustrate the concept, a pattern is repeated throughout the exhibition, with four “characters”:

- 1. Anatomical modification:** anatomical mannequins with joints highlight the body parts modified by clothing and draw our attention to how this is achieved in each period.
- 2. Prosthesis:** a mannequin showing the interior structure that helps to achieve anatomical changes.
- 3. Main character:** the costume that best represents the standard shape of the period of the time and the relationship with the body that wore it.
- 4. Full Image** from the period, showing a person wearing the costume, the hairstyle, accessories and context. These supports are paintings from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on a lenticular system that introduces a certain movement; and videos for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- 5. Reference:** a gold mannequin in twenty-first century dress which formally recalls the silhouette of the period and helps to explain the historical costumes to the visitor.

The rest of the cabinet presents the different models of the period.



The mannequin, the artificial body is the support of the dress. The organizers of the exhibition deliberately opted for mannequins without heads, to give prominence to the dress, but with legs and arms when the model requires them. All mannequins required *mannequinage*: that is, the process to create the specific form that each dress needs. With innocuous materials, volumes are created on the mannequin to obtain the exact shape for each dress, giving volume where needed, filling in parts of the body. The costumes are assembled without modifications, without any folds or stitches, in order to favour their preservation.

The costumes in the collection belonging mostly to specific individuals and are therefore made to measure. The system of sizes did not arrive until the 1960s, the era of prêt-à-porter. Each dress tells us about the body of the person who wore it. We also know each model in great detail thanks to documentary sources as prints and photographs.

The modelled body: from the corset of the body to the corset of the mind

In contrast to the Museum's motionless mannequins, real bodies are a kind of capital that require major important economic and aesthetic investment, following the canons of beauty of each particular period. These canons oblige us to be permanently aware of our bodies and urge us to be slim, muscular, and healthy. Today's global fashion standardizes us; the differentiation occurs not only in the way we dress, but also in altering our skin and body shape. Our society "invites" us to diet and to do sport; "aesthetic" surgery proposes an ever younger figure, in the image of athletes, actors, singers and models. Our freedom of choice is reduced because social pressure makes us follow the aesthetic of the moment. *Dressing the body* aims to reflect this. ●

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Can Marfà, showcasing knitted fabric at the Mataró Museum

by MATARÓ MUSEUM

Photographs: ©Mataró Museum and ©Sergi Ruiz

Mataró has long been a leading centre for the production of knitted fabrics, a mainstay of the local economy and the industry that has lent the city its unique identity in Catalonia.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the knitted fabric industry fell into sharp decline in Catalonia as a result of successive crises across the whole of the textile sector. Against this backdrop, Jaume Vilaseca i Beltranpetit, an industrialist from Mataró, brought together a group of professionals (machine manufacturers, textile producers, mechanics, weavers, etc.) to begin work on the recovery, restoration, study and classification of diverse sources of material evidence related to knitted fabrics from an industry that was rapidly disappearing. His aim was to create a textile museum in Mataró dedicated exclusively to knitted fabric, bearing witness to its historical importance in the city and the wider region.

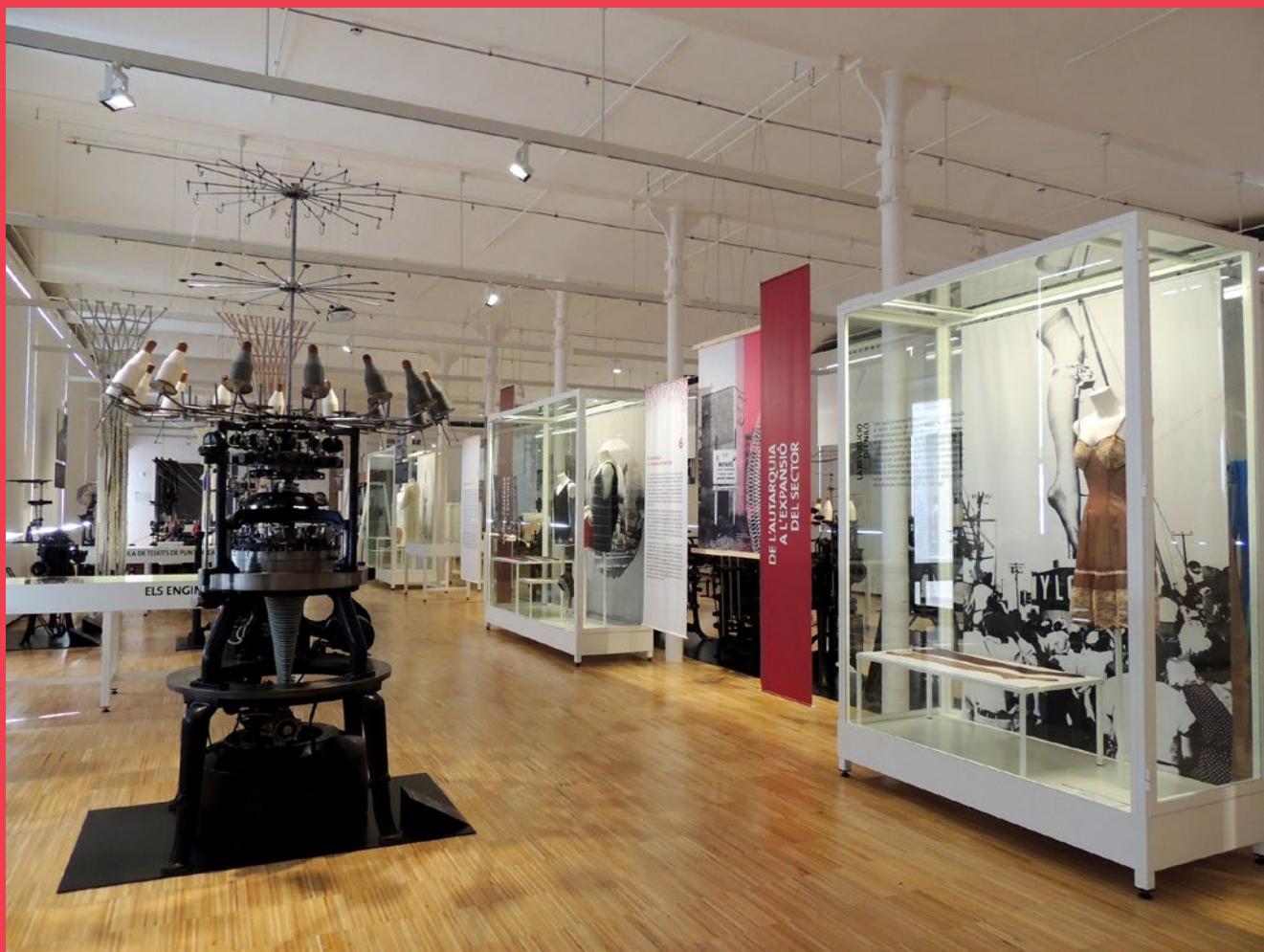
Mataró City Council, meanwhile, had been seeking an opportunity to present the city's textile heritage to the public as part of the Mataró Museum, adding a new element to its cultural and tourist amenities. It was particularly keen to focus on knitted fabric, given its crucial role in the history of the city.

The two projects converged and in 1996 the Jaume Vilaseca Foundation signed an agreement with the City Council to make the collection public. Although Vilaseca died in 1997, thanks to the commitment of his team of collaborators and the goodwill of his children the project went ahead, attracting support from private individuals, companies and professionals from across Catalonia. As a result, the Jaume Vilaseca Foundation succeeded in assembling one of the most remarkable collections of industrial heritage in the country.

In 2009, 2010 and 2011 the City Council undertook refurbishment of one of the factories in the architecturally striking industrial complex of Fàbrica Marfà, to house an extension to the Mataró Museum that would specialize in knitted fabrics. Fàbrica Marfà (or *Can Marfà*), a factory built in the Manchester style in 1880-1881, was once the leading producer of knitted fabrics in Spain, boasting the largest workforce and the finest product.

Can Marfà, a new extension of the Mataró Museum dedicated to the knitted fabric industry. Photograph: Sergi Ruiz.





▲ Partial view of the permanent exhibition: *Mataró, capital del gènere de punt.*

► Tools used in textile production, c. 1920-1940. Permanent collection.





Bank of knitting machines,
c. 1929. Permanent collection.

In 2013 the City Hall and the Jaume Vilaseca Foundation signed a definitive agreement to make the museum a reality. The collection donated by the Foundation is the basis of a permanent exhibition at the Mataró Museum focusing on the city as a capital of knitted fabrics. This makes it the third key area covered by the museum. The first two areas, which feature exhibitions in the main building at Can Serra, focus on Mataró as the Roman city of Iluro and on Mataró as a Mediterranean city.

Since 28 March 2015 [Can Marfà](#) has been home to the Mataró Museum's newest extension, dedicated to knitted fabrics, a crucial part of local and national history that did not have its own museum space until now. The new extension provides 1,800 square metres of space spread across three floors. The ground floor, which is a multipurpose space open to the general public, will host a varied programme of activities encompassing temporary exhibitions, lectures, conferences, presentations, educational workshops and more. The aim is to offer events that appeal to a diverse public, presenting the past and present of the sector alongside opportunities to learn and reflect, in a fun and entertaining setting.

The first floor houses a display of equipment, including a sizeable sample from the [Jaume Vilaseca Foundation collections](#), organized thematically and chronologically. With this design, the curators aim to give visitors two distinct

Recreation of Cayetano Marfà Crivillès's office. Permanent collection.





Toton Comella display case.
Permanent collection.

paths to guide them through the exhibition. The first leads through the process of textile production, while the second charts the development of the textile industry in Catalonia from the eighteenth century to the present day. The display tells an economic and social history that many Mataró residents have experienced first-hand, inviting visitors to reflect on the events of the past and the challenges of the present and future. The exhibits on the first floor occupy an area of 600 square metres and are organized into seven thematic units that give context to the machinery, clothing, images and documents on display:

- Area 1. Getting started:** Video describing the characteristics of knitted fabric and the factors that have had a bearing on its production in Mataró and Catalonia.
- Area 2. From fibre to mesh:** The manufacturing processes for knitted fabric: spinning, weaving, conditioning and finishing, design, patterns, garments, labelling, packaging and sales.
- Area 3. The beginnings of knitted fabric:** Cottage industry and domestic workshops, the development and geographical locations of knitted fabric production in Catalonia. From handlooms to the first mechanical knitting machines.



Guided tour. Permanent collection.

Area 4. The industrialization of knitted fabric: The industrial production of undergarments and stockings. Technological innovation and the organization of labour in factories. The role of the industrial bourgeoisie in the development of the knitted fabric industry, exports and the consolidation of the Maresme cluster around Mataró.

Area 5. Fashion, imagination and sport: Changes in consumption patterns of apparel, the influence of fashion and the emergence of new products. The commitment to training and technological renewal.

Area 6. From autarky to sector growth. The economic policy of autarky and the impetus to build machinery for knitted fabrics. Ancillary industries. The nylon revolution.

Area 7. Future prospects: The continued survival of the Maresme cluster devoted to knitted fabrics. The importance of design, the commitment to quality and the application of new technologies. The sector's threats and opportunities.

The second floor, where work is ongoing, will provide space for collections, including a technical work area, a reserve section and storage facilities. It will house collections of clothing, scientific instruments and small-diameter machines. The aim is to provide access to a portion of the reserve collections, extending the display space and enabling visitors to view a significant proportion of the Jaume Vilaseca Foundation collections. The second floor will also have an educational space where visitors will be able to learn more about the displays on the first floor and gain hands-on experience.



Display case with stockings c.
1890-1910. Permanent collection.

Work is now under way on the second phase of the project, which includes the refurbishment of the second floor of Can Marfà and the second part of the Jaume Vilaseca Foundation inventory (4,000 objects have so far been catalogued out of an estimated total of 8,000 pieces).

The long-term goal is to establish Can Marfà as a pivotal institution in the Catalan network of science and technical museums and a member of the Network of Textile Museums of Catalonia. •

For more information:

<http://culturamataro.cat/ca/museu-i-exposicions/museu-de-mataro/can-marfa>

Unusual lace creations at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Madrid

by NEUS RIBAS SAN EMETERIO, director of the Arenys de Mar Museum

1 The article by Ana Cabrera La Fuente, *El Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas en sus primeros años (1912-1930)* reproduces the appendices to the Royal Decree which established the creation of the National Museum of Industrial Arts.

2 Aurora Gutiérrez Larraya played a key role in the creation of the National Museum of Decorative Arts, as the historian Joan Miquel Llodrà has demonstrated.

3 Javier Fernández explains the history of this incipient Museum of Lace and participation of the writer and anthropologist Carmen Baroja, one of the first historians of art in our country and author of the book *El encaje en España*, Editorial Labor, Barcelona, 1933.

The origins of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Madrid

The National Museum of Decorative Arts in Madrid was set up 1871, following the example of the South Kensington Museum (today the V&A) in London. The museum was created to revive the original aims of the universal exhibitions of promoting craftsmanship and trade, and of improving the training of workers in industry. A Royal Decree of 1912¹ later established the creation of the National Museum of Industrial Arts.

The first directors of the museum were Rafael Domènech and Luis Pérez Bueno, but they were soon joined by experts in the various fields. In textiles, important contributions were made by Aurora Gutiérrez Larraya, a designer in lace, *batik*, and leather.² The museum had a strong educational mission, and sought to make contact with other European institutions; indeed Domènech, Pérez and Gutiérrez travelled abroad to learn about the work underway at various European museums. The museum was organized into eight sections, seven containing pieces (stone, metal, wood, earthenware, textiles, graphic arts, and ivory, shells and leather), and an eighth section dedicated to education.

The stocks came from state museums or government agencies, and there were also some acquisitions. The acquisitions were mainly old Spanish pieces, or foreign pieces with a Spanish influence; finally, for educational purposes and also to enhance the museum's international dimension, the museum also purchased items with contemporary designs which reflected the transformation of the decorative arts in the museum's early years, from the UK, Denmark, Germany, Austria and elsewhere in Europe.

In 1927 the museum changed its name to the National Museum of Decorative Arts, since it was decided that certain artistic items could not be catalogued under the heading of *Industrial Arts*. Curiously, in the 1930s, the Museum of Lace was created as a part of the National Museum of Decorative Arts, but the museum lasted only a short time, and it was soon transferred to the Museum of the Spanish People along with the stocks from the Museums of Regional and Historical Costume and Popular Art.³

Entrance hall. National Museum of Decorative Arts. Madrid.



The textile and lace collection

4 ARBETETA MIRA, Letizia: "La colección textil del Museo Nacional de las Artes Decorativas. Su contenido e historial museológico". *Boletín de la ANABAD*, 1994.

5 The article by Ana Cabrera, "El Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas en sus primeros años (1912-1930)", reproduces a photograph of these samples.

The collection consists mainly of flat, untailored fabrics from private households, or civil and religious garments. The oldest are a set of Coptic textiles from the second century. The aim of the collection is to represent the diversity of textile techniques: brocade, embroidery, *passementerie*, batik, lace, and so on.

The textile collections of the National Museum of Decorative Arts were acquired mostly between 1913 and 1916, according to Letizia Arbeteta Mira in her article *The textile collection of the National Museum of Decorative Arts*. The main criterion for acquisition was that the fabric had been made in Spain, and priority was often given to pieces made using traditional craft techniques.

While awaiting further studies to identify sources, all kinds of historic textiles obtainable in Spain, whether Spanish or not, entered the collection. Among religious garments accessories such as *mantillas*, gloves, bags, belts, etc. were acquired, but this important representation was missing among the Museum's collections, perhaps because religious garments were not considered "national" and only the design and embroidery of the fabrics was considered of interest.⁴

The first directors of the museum seem to have looked for pieces in the Balkans and Russia, considering them to bear similarities to popular Spanish creations. An example of this group is the fabric fragment CE23551, with orange and ecru bobbin lace braid made in Europe. The description states that it comes from central Europe, from the Czech Republic or Slovakia. Slovak traditional art is characterized by the use of different colours according to region and religion: Lutherans and Protestants made white lace, and Catholics used colours.

Since the initial acquisitions, the museum has increased its stocks of textiles at auctions and thanks to private donations. In the case of bobbin and needle lace, the first acquisitions seem to have corresponded to lace samples that were made in Spain, catalogued on small cards.⁵ Albeteta mentions the collection of metallic lace known as *Point d'Espagne*. This lace had been widely used in Spain since the late sixteenth century and over the years has been applied to religious clothing and furnishings.

Fan no. CE18006, attributed to Ricardo Mateos García.
National Museum of
Decorative Arts. Madrid.
MNAD_CE18006a.



The collection of lace fans

6 Belgian chiffon is characterized by needle lace motifs on a tulle background. Duchess lace, named after the Duchess Maria Henriette, future queen of Belgium and a patron of lace work, is made on bobbins. These techniques emerged in Belgium in the mid-nineteenth century and were widely used in making collars, fans, and clothing accessories. In the late nineteenth century a new kind of lace appeared that mixed the two styles and created highly decorative results.

Among the bobbin and needle lace pieces at the museum, perhaps the collection of fans is the most interesting. Most are from Belgium, made in chiffon needle lace; others combine Gauze point and the Duchess lace characteristic of that country.⁶ The fans date from the second half of the nineteenth century; made in the romantic style, they are also called *alfonsinos*. These pieces were highly valued by the Spanish aristocracy and bourgeoisie, and in fact the prestige of Belgian lace endured until the first quarter of the twentieth century. The design is a floral theme with large roses on a tulle background as seen in the fans no. [CE04985](#) and no. [CE12202](#) surrounded by lobe shapes and large leaves with a highly decorative, naturalistic design. Together, the fans stand out for their technical quality and in some cases they present painted scenes of domestic life or scenes depicting romance and recreational activities. The rods of the fans are usually made of fine materials. This type of fan, which was often given to brides, remained popular throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth, when modernism began to impose its new styles. After the First World War, these objects lost importance as the fashion and ornaments of the 1920s took hold.

Among the fans in the collection, two unique pieces are particularly interesting: the numbers [CE18006](#) CE27222. The first is attributed to Ricardo Mateos García of Salamanca, who was probably the designer or a shop owner. The piece dates from the second half of the nineteenth century. It is a *pericón*, a large fan used in flamenco dance. Its uniqueness lies in the painted scene that occupies a large part of the fan, with two female figures. One is in the central

⁷ *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 172, 19 July 1977, p. 31.449.

⁸ Two articles in *ABC* and *El Diario Vasco* reported the purchase and the origin of the pieces.

⁹ The two lace making centres began their activity in the second half of the eighteenth century. They reached their peak in the nineteenth century, before the advent of the textile industry.

part of the fan, dancing, and next to her is an angel with a tambourine; on the right we see the inscription *Dubais*, who may have been the author of the scene. On the left is another female figure, carrying a lute and dressed in Turkish style. The two scenes are framed by bobbin lace work with a design of ferns, palm leaves and flowers twisting around the drawing. It is certainly an original creation, far removed from the symmetrical structures found in other pieces, and it incorporates motifs inspired by the tastes of the early twentieth century. The quality of the work and especially the originality of the design suggest that this was an exclusive commission.

The second fan, no. [CE27222](#), was acquired in 2007 for 10,077.60 €⁷ from *Subastas Segre* in Madrid. This fan had belonged to Queen Maria Cristina (1858-1929). According to press reports,⁸ it came from a buyer in Brazil who purchased three objects from the heirs of Queen Maria Cristina – a Fabergé box, a brooch and the fan, all documented and authenticated. The fan was made by the jeweller's Leitao, in Portugal. We do not know the reason for the gift or when it was made; Leitao was founded in 1822 and is still operating, and in fact is the most prestigious jeweller's in Lisbon.

The fan acquired by the National Museum of Decorative Arts is made of bobbin lace and has exquisite working in the rods, inside a velvet-lined box. The rods are simple, but the guards are richly decorated with symbols of the royal family: the Golden Fleece topped with a royal crown, two coats of arms, of the Spanish and Austrian royal families, and other symbols like the lotus flower, the Greek cross and the letter M inside a circle of gold. All these details are made with applications of 18 carat gold, platinum, diamonds, sapphires and polychrome enamels.

The backing of the fan, made of bobbin lace, is not particularly notable in terms of its technique. According to the documentation the lace was made in Belgium, but the technical and stylistic features do not necessarily identify it as such; it could in fact have been made in Portugal where historically there were two major production centres of bobbin lace, in Vila do Conde and Peniche.⁹ Portuguese lace was made with bobbins and the designs are often floral or geometric and naturalistic. The design of this fan is highly original, with a structure of pointed arches inspired by neo-Gothic styles; this architectural design is far removed from the floral designs of most of the lace of the romantic period of the second half of the nineteenth century and reflects neo-Gothic tastes, closer to the modernist aesthetic with its revival of medieval elements. According to the description of the piece, the fan is late nineteenth-century; but the description also quotes Javier Benito Alonso, an art historian, who believes that the precious stones were cut in the early 1900s. The architectural design of the lace also suggests that the fan was made after the turn of the century.

Fan made for Queen Maria Cristina by Casa Leitao of Portugal. National Museum of Decorative Arts. Madrid.
MNAD_CE27222a and MNAD_CE27222b.





Household items

10 M^a Ángeles González Mena and Natividad Villoldo have studied the typology of the *soles* of the different areas of Spain, which began to be made in the sixteenth century.

11 The Marès Lace Museum of Arenys de Mar preserves many examples of Venetian lace from the Francesca Bonnemaison collection, which probably correspond to pieces made at the School for Women founded by Bonnemaison.

A large group of the lace article in the collection of the National Museum of Decorative Arts are cloths and tablecloths used for the decoration of the household. Many are in the popular tradition, like pieces [CE21950](#) and [CE21387](#) with the characteristic *soles* we find in several areas of Spain: radial forms made with a needle and repeated throughout the fabric, and framed inside a quadrangular structure.¹⁰

In addition to these works of popular tradition, there are also two more complex pieces. The first, number [CE25598](#) is a large tablecloth measuring 550 x 210 cm. The centre is made with a mixture of embroidery and needle lace; around it is an organdy fabric with embroidered insertions. The centre is lavishly decorated with flowers and leaves, and includes figures representing a group of people dancing hand in hand dressed in eighteenth-century clothes. The motifs were made in buttonhole stitch and contoured to give more relief to the figures. This type of needle work is called Venetian lace – not to be confused with the productions of the 1500s and 1600s, since this form dates from the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth. In spite of the name, this lace was not exclusively made in Venice, and in fact the same technique was also used in Spain.¹¹



One of three tablecloths made by Casa Zaida in 1929. National Museum of Decorative Arts. Madrid. CE21681.



¹² Official State Gazette,
no.. 51, 1 March 1977, p. 4867.

The last work is undoubtedly one of the most elaborate, in terms of both its technical quality and its design. It is a set of three tablecloths, two circular and one oval with catalogue numbers CE21680, CE21681 and CE21682. The pieces were made in 1929 by the Casa Zaida in Madrid and were presented at the Hispano-American Exhibition in Seville, where they won a Medal of Honour. These pieces were donated to the museum in 1977 by Consuelo Díaz Prieto and Arturo López Rodríguez, in memory of Quintina Rodríguez Díaz.¹²

The three tablecloths represent several scenes from the story *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. The two circular ones, CE21680 and CE21681, are divided into four arcs with small flowers in needle-made lace, framing four distinct scenes from the Don Quixote story. The oval tablecloth, no. CE21682, is divided into six arcs with small flowers in needle-made lace. This piece represents six scenes from the novel and between the scenes are portraits of the protagonists. All the scenes are in needle-made lace, both the motifs and the tulle background.

Needle-made lace is not very common in Spain. From the technical perspective these pieces are closer to Belgian needle lace; certainly, if they were created by Casa Zaida, they would have been made by the best workers.

Stylistically, these pieces constitute a clear departure from the standard floral designs, and strive to represent literary scenes in which the human figure is the protagonist. This would have required a considerable effort on the part of the textile designer.

The set of lace creations at the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Madrid: a collection worth studying.

In this short article we have only given a brief outline of this unusual collection. It is a first attempt, based on a consultation of its online catalogue and a study of the pieces in two visits to the museum, but we expect that a deeper study will uncover some more gems. The pieces made by the last lace makers to the Royal Household, now in the possession of the museum, and Joan Miquel Llodrà's ongoing study of Aurora Gutiérrez Larraya, the textile expert who assisted Rafael Domènech in the early days, suggest that there may well be more important specimens stored in the museum's drawers and cabinets. ●

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L'Espanya Industrial and the Barcelona Universal Exhibition of 1888

by ASSUMPTA DANGLA

1 GUTIÉRREZ, M. Lluïsa.
La España Industrial.
Innovació i recerca. Col·legi
d'Enginyers Industrials de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 1997.

2 CABANA, Francesc.
Fàbriques i empresaris. Els
protagonistes de la Revolució
Industrial a Catalunya.
Vol. 2. Cotoners. Diputació de
Barcelona, 2001, p. 83-112.

L'Espanya Industrial was the first cotton firm to set up in Spain, and it was also one of the most important until well into the twentieth century. From its foundation, it fought hard to overcome the crises that arose and was able to do so thanks, to a large extent, to its commitment to development, innovation and research.

In the mid-nineteenth century, as manufacturing began to give way to factory production, technology transfer took on a leading role in the textile industry. In Catalonia, some companies brought in new procedures that favoured the transmission of knowledge. *L'Espanya Industrial* played its part in this process by introducing specific measures that allowed it to expand its resources. For instance, its managers and technical staff travelled abroad to keep abreast of the latest developments and to purchase machinery, especially in France and England; they studied at training centres in other European countries, hired technical staff from abroad and kept in constant contact with other companies in the field¹. At this time the latest innovations were beginning to reach Catalonia via domestic and foreign trading companies which imported and sold machinery and chemicals, and leading European firms opened branches in Catalonia. *L'Espanya Industrial*, always attentive to the needs of the market and the latest discoveries, was quick to capitalize on these resources.

The company was founded in 1847 by the seven sons of Maties Muntadas and Francesca Campeny, woolmakers from Igualada. The brothers were all present to a greater or less extent in the creation and launch of the factory. The first two managers were brothers, and the third was Maties Muntadas, son of Josep Antoni Muntadas, also one of the founders. Maties Muntadas ran the company from 1882 until 1927². His strength of character and the determination with which he led the company were crucial to *l'Espanya Industrial*'s survival.

From the very beginning, the company was keen to establish itself and it participated at national, international and universal exhibitions. Indeed, *l'Espanya Industrial* won two gold medals at the Universal Exhibition of 1888, a showcase event where the firm displayed its innovations and worked hard to expand its range of customers. One of the promoters and members



<i>Sin dyes.</i>	<i>Engamado 2</i>	2,50	185	0,47	
	<i>Verde 2 (4-10)</i>	0,43	380	0,14	
	<i>Cachet 12 (8-1)</i>	1,45	185	0,27	
	<i>Azul 854</i>	0,75	565	0,23	
	<i>Oliva C</i>	0,50	440	0,22	
	<i>Oliva 10 (6-1)</i>	1,07	410	0,44	
	<i>Yegrn ATN</i>	1,00	900	0,90	
			<i>Suman</i>	3,065	2,90
					<i>2,90 Plas</i>

Expenditure log for dyes, 1888.
MEPM 6075. Photograph: Esther de Prades.

of the Commission for the exhibition was precisely the manager of *l'Espanya Industrial*, Maties Muntadas, one of the leading figures in the political life of Barcelona.

Overcoming Crises

3 Memòria llegida a la Junta General d'Accionistes 23 de febrer de 1890. Arxiu Històric del Museu de l'Estampació de Premià de Mar.

The years before the Universal Exhibition of 1888 were full of difficulties and management took certain controversial steps. In 1884, the director ordered a detailed study of the costs of the factory. Even the smallest expenditure in each section (yarn, dyes, prints, engravings, cylinders, etc.) was analysed in great detail in order to reduce costs and to increase production.

After the study Maties Muntadas concluded that, above all, the firm needed to overhaul its machinery and begin a savings plan. The decision did not please either workers or shareholders, but the manager pushed on with his project. After a great deal of effort and many delays, the new machinery was installed and put into operation in 1889³. It triggered a remarkable recovery and once again set the company on the path to success.

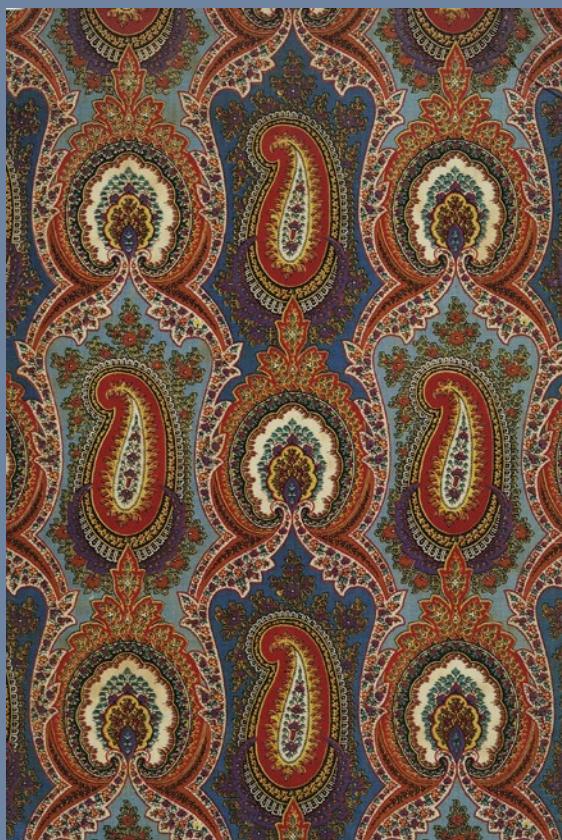
The year 1887 was marked by a long strike that lasted four months; production fell sharply from 33,189 printed pieces in the second half of 1886 to 18,233 pieces in the first half of 1887. Since 1850, the factory had had a section which engraved many of the copper cylinders that were used in printing machines. As a result of the strike, the section disappeared and many experts who had been in the service of the factory for years were laid off: Joan Puigmacià, Juli Krepser, Damià Coch, Josep Romeu, Antoni Walch, Bernat Berg, Antoni Ratera and Manel Quintana, among others.

The situation of the draughtsmen was quite similar. *l'Espanya Industrial* had had a design section where the leading illustrator was Joan Rabadà Vallbé, a pupil of the painter Carlos de Haes, who had studied at the Llotja School. Rabadà, born in 1850, had worked all his life in the factory; in 1888 he presented his last designs, two of them to commemorate the Universal Exhibition in Barcelona. Another section that suffered the consequences of the crisis was the colours room, which made formulations for the pastes of dyes and printing tests. That year the only colourist who remained on the payroll was Josep Tay, who lost his two companions.

l'Espanya Industrial has been studied in depth from the point of view of economic history and, secondly, from a scientific and technical standpoint, with analyses of documents on dyes and the machinery used in the factory. These

Printed cotton taffeta, 1888. MEPM, 6555. Photograph: Esther de Prades.





Printed cretonne with cashmere motifs, *l'Espanya Industrial*, 1888. MEP 6191. Photograph: Esther de Prades. [See detail](#).

4 The Premià de Mar Print Museum preserves a large collection of sample books, formula books and original designs from L'Espanya Industrial, as do the Textile Museum and Documentation Centre in Terrassa, the Barcelona Design Museum, the History Museum of Sabadell and the Musée de l'Impression sur Étoffes de Mulhouse. These pieces are also to be found in a number of private collections. The Archive of Catalonia and the Premià de Mar Print Museum possess almost all the company archives.

studies have been possible since virtually the entire archive of documents of the company has survived. The correspondence sent and received, the minutes of the shareholders' meetings, the accounting books and other documentation of an economic, social, scientific and technical nature allow us to trace the history of the factory in great detail. The firm also preserved a good set of formula books, sample books, samples and original print designs⁴. This is a relatively rare occurrence: along with the products, the documentation of the factory still exists. The documents are invaluable tools for the study of the pieces, which bear witness to the transfer of technology and provide insights into the relationships between the different sections of the factory, the guiding lines governing the company, and the different stages it went through during its development.

Issues of style and trends

Printing has always been one of the most complex processes in the textile industry. At *l'Espanya Industrial* many different craft workers were involved: colourists, draughtsmen, printmakers and engravers, among others. All these professionals had expertise in their field, but also had to be aware of the different stages that made up the manufacturing; they had to work together on the creation of a mass-produced product and communication between them was a vital part of the process, a task that had to be coordinated by the management.

The designers had to have knowledge of composition, and had to be sure to create drawings that would fit well both lengthwise and in cross-section. Moreover, the designs could only contain a limited number of colours,



Printed cretonne with upholstery designs, c. 1888.
Private collection. Photograph:
Assumpta Dangla.



depending on the blocks to be engraved or the number of printing cylinders in the machine. Therefore, they produced an original drawing that contained the *rapport*, or the minimum unit of repetition; they then separated the colours and engraved the motifs on wooden blocks or cylinders with the colour to be printed. In the case of *l'Espanya Industrial*, where most of the printing was done with machines containing engraved copper cylinders, up to 12 colours could be printed.

Following the strike of 1887 and the loss of the draughtsman Joan Rabadà, the factory began to order most of the blocks, cylinders and designs from abroad. The firm's correspondence of the time reflects this change. Maties Muntadas often made trips to France to visit draughtsmen and to keep up with the latest trends, and he also asked foreign experts to recommend colourists or highly skilled engravers. And precisely between 1887 and 1889 he contacted new draughtsmen, who supplied the factory with the *most novel designs*, a concept that was often repeated in the firm's documents and was always strongly emphasized.

Following the director's trips to France and the Universal Exhibition of Barcelona of 1888, many draughtsmen came into contact with the factory. In 1888 it had a lively relationship with designers and design studios in Paris and Mulhouse: Constant Tillier, Charles Scheindecker, Henry Andresz, Antonio Badia, Paul Mouton, J. Pfenninger, E. Petitdemagne, Oscar Schmidt, Eugène Schiffmacher, Paul Schnebeler, E. Sins, G. Muller, Mathias Wehrey, Mathias Renner, Daniel Dessins Industriels, Julien & Cron, Kreuscher & Engel, Rhem & Garnache, and others. The firm also received assistance from Charles Ventrillon a draughtsman who had worked for years in the factory and then, after moving to France, acted as a correspondent and sent drawings to Barcelona.

The firm paid great attention to the trends from abroad, especially from France. *L'Espanya Industrial* regularly received samples and notebooks with the latest developments which served as the inspiration for the design of its new collections. The firm had a subscription with the most prestigious fashion houses.

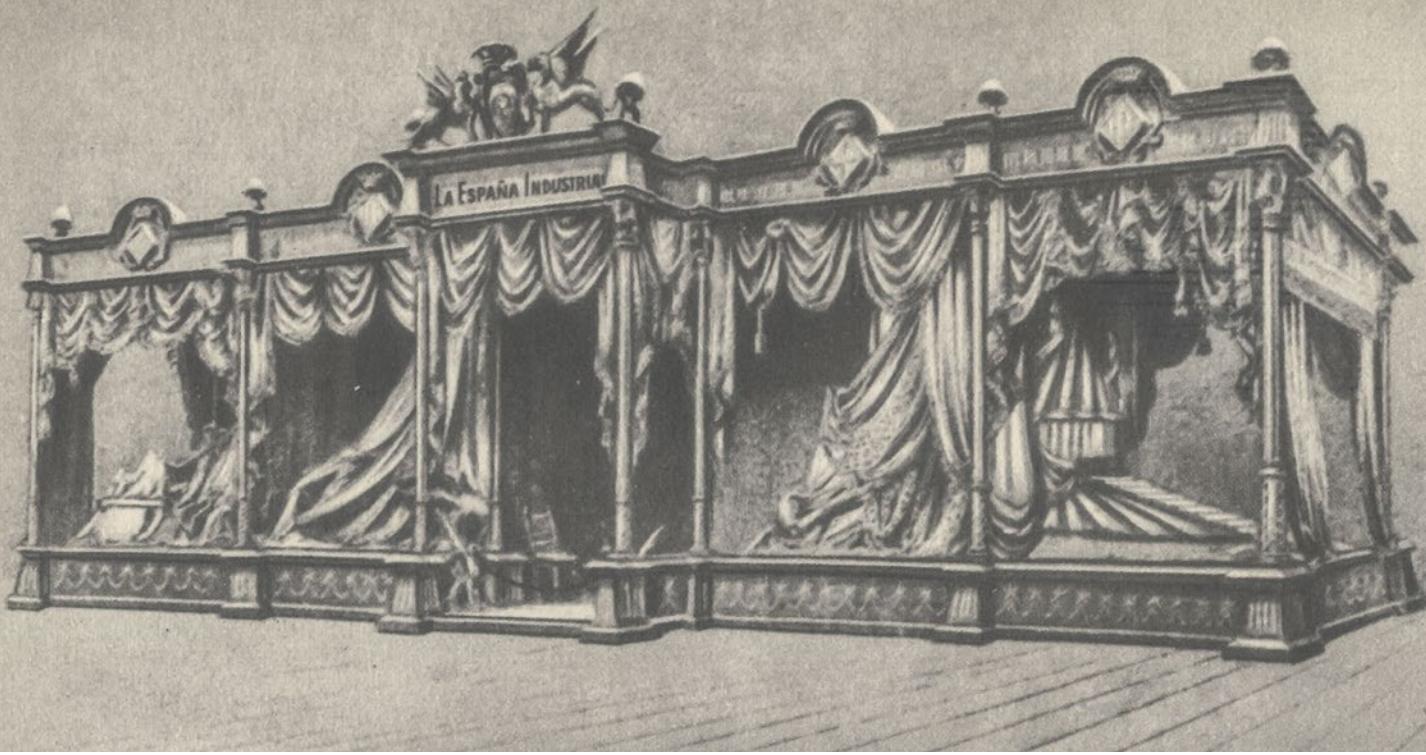
The director gave instructions to his artists, sometimes very precise, on the type and number of colours, indications about the size of the motifs to print, their arrangement, and other issues related to design. These instructions bear witness to Muntadas's extensive knowledge of dyes, machinery and design.

In his correspondence, his instructions regarding *style* or type refer not just to drawing, but to technique, colour and shapes as well. Therefore, the term *style* was not only a formal aspect, but was considered the result of the manufacturing process. In a letter of 1888 to the draughtsman Oscar Schmidt, Muntadas wrote:

Ci joint vous envoie quelques types de une nouvelle fabrication (enlevage sur fond noir) pour vous le faire connaitre et vous commander 4 types sur cet ordre de fabrication en tachant de faire quelqu'un avec bordure de fleurs et le fond semis avec des fleurs moyennes; les autres selon votre goût, mais pas de carreaux car ces morceaux que je vous envoie sont seulement pour vous montrer le genre. Il nous faut les dessins à deux couleurs, c'est-à-dire, rouge et blanc, blanc et jaune, jaune et rouge, mais toujours en fond noir.

And in another letter to Schmidt:

Consequently a votres demandes j'ai l'avantage de vous faire nouveau commande de 4 dessins en fond rouge sur l'style du dessin n. 7 plus 3 dessins par l'ordre de l'échantillon ci-inclus, prenant garde du style de fabrication, car comme vous voyez le blanc est obtenu par moyen de l'acide.



L'Espanya Industrial installation at the Universal Exhibition [Libro del Centenario (1847-1947). *La España Industrial*].

The success of *l'Espanya Industrial*'s products was mainly due to the fact that the firm followed the trends introduced in France. This practice sometimes came in for criticism in Barcelona, on the grounds that the design did not take local art as its model. The abundant correspondence with foreign draughtsmen often requested above all, *designs of the utmost novelty* – that is, ones that follow the trends of Paris or Mulhouse. The factory was anxious to receive the drawings as soon as possible, in order to keep ahead of the strong competition at home.

A great showcase

The Universal Exhibition was the showcase where the company displayed its most valuable products. In 1888 *l'Espanya Industrial* produced fabrics of all kinds, including printed corduroy; in fact, this latter production increased in volume in the following decade, and by the turn of the century the firm was known best for its corduroy rather than its prints⁵.

With a stand of 125 square metres described as “splendid and majestic”, *l'Espanya Industrial* aimed to show off the novelty and quality of its design. According to the reports of the time, the design was one of the most carefully nurtured features: “*the management of such an important company pays great attention to the artistic part of this industry, because the firm's success and its dominance in the markets is largely dependent on it*”⁶.

The installation was presided over by a tapestry printed with the traditional method of wooden blocks known as *motilles de bac*, which bore the design engraved in relief. It was a large tapestry depicting an allegory of the industry, inspired by a contemporary French piece created in praise of agriculture. It was hand-printed and made in imitation of the Gobelins works; the aim was to recover the magnificence of the ancient and complex traditional procedure,

⁵ *Libro del Centenario (1847-1947). La España Industrial*. Barcelona: La España Industrial, 1947, p. 65.

⁶ *La España Industrial. Sociedad Anónima en su 82º aniversario (1847-1929)*. Barcelona: La España Industrial, 1929, p. 30

Woodblock printed tapestry for the stand at the Barcelona Universal Exhibition of 1888. Design by Joan Rabadà Vallbé. MECM 1214.
Photograph: Esther de Prades.





Commemorative handkerchief for the Barcelona Universal Exhibition of 1888. Design by Joan Rabadà Vallbé, MEP. Photograph: Esther de Prades. [See detail](#).

now consigned to second place by modern mechanical printing cylinders. It was designed by Joan Rabadà, and wooden printing blocks were sent to J. Cholet in Paris, who made three copies in earthy colours. The tapestry was also displayed at the stand of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889, where the company won the Grand Prix and at the International Furniture Exhibition in Barcelona in 1923, where it earned the same award.

Following the Universal Exhibition a commemorative scarf was printed, a common occurrence at the time. Joan Rabadà made the design for the contest. The large scarf reproduces emblematic buildings from the exhibition, surrounded by angels and inscriptions.

The firm won two gold medals, one for plain and printed cotton yarns and fabrics and another for imitation tapestries. The motifs for clothing were mainly geometric or inspired by flora and fauna. The drawings of flowers and plants varied widely: many clothes reproduce roses and wildflowers in up to twelve different colours. The most common compositions were plants or silhouettes on dark backgrounds which have small branches with flowers and leaves and simple shapes. These clothes, mainly made for agricultural workers, used the *rongeant* technique. This type of printing created a light motif on a dark background. The garment was dyed black, brown or indigo and then the motifs were printed using the blocks or cylinders impregnated in the paste that removed the dye and created a new colour.

Printed twill with floral design.
C. 1888. Private collection.
Photograph: Assumpta Dangla.



⁷ DANGLA, Assumpta i DÒRIA, Mònica, "La transición a los colorantes sintéticos en La España Industrial", *Datatextil*, no. 27, Terrassa, November 2012, pp. 42-55.

Among other motifs, we find life-size chestnuts, butterflies and insects, often in light colours on a dark background. There were also synthetic plant designs with the *coup de fouet* forms characteristic of *modernisme*, the Catalan *art nouveau*. In the case of the scarves, most were decorated with geometric shapes and floral borders. The motifs were outlined in black on a background of red and *nankin*, a unique yellow colour that mimicked the clothes of the region in China of that name.

Other new shades of colour were introduced at this time. In fact, the colour room of *l'Espanya Industrial* incorporated new dyes as they were discovered. From 1856, when the first synthetic dye was created, the factory replaced by natural and artificial dyes with dyes made in the laboratory. The 1880s were marked by the coexistence of the three types of dyestuffs – natural, artificial and synthetic. As the decade progressed the use of synthetics increased, and by the end of the century they had virtually replaced the traditional ones⁷. The result is clear to see in the clothes of the period, with a new, much wider range of colours.

Fabrics for upholstery especially reproduced plant motifs and floral compositions with large *rapports*, or scenes with human figures, often inspired by literature. At the time, it was common for fabrics to reproduce scenes from a novel or an opera libretto. This tradition had been in force since the eighteenth century, when the French *toiles* represented literary themes. Following the publication of a book or the performance of a opera, an artist would paint

8 SERRATE, Jose M. Et altri, *Estudios completos sobre la Exposición Universal celebrada en Barcelona el año 1888*. Diairo Mercantil. Barcelona 1888 p. 362.

a picture that would be shown in a *salon*; then, an engraver would use the picture as the inspiration for a print, which would be copied by designers. This sequence is followed in textile printing during the nineteenth century as well.

The exhibition was a success and aroused great interest; orders soared and the display fulfilled its purpose admirably. The firm also received offers from designers asking for work. The exhibition was attended by professionals of all specialities and suppliers and served as a venue for a fruitful exchange of knowledge. The chronicle of the time reported the event as follows⁸:

"This powerful company which sets immense capital in motion, which employs thousands of workers, and which accommodates in its vast and grandiose buildings all the advances in the field, indisputably marches on at the head of the Catalan printing industry. It has recently renewed all its machinery, and can claim with confidence to be an industrial and commercial centre at the level of the most famous in Europe".

Despite its dependence on abroad, *l'Espanya Industrial* was also able to innovate and create its own products thanks to the imagination of the technical staff at the factory. This allowed the firm to keep ahead of its competitors; this was especially true in the last years of the century, when it stood out from the rest of the field thanks to the use of new special fabrics like flannel and corduroy, and printing in colours or in gold and silver. ●

Artistic fabrics, unique portraits (I)

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Photographs: ©CDMT, Quico Ortega

Conserved in museums and private homes across Catalonia are a series of artistic fabrics – or woven artworks – that share many similarities with engravings and photographs but reflect a unique production technique popularised in a specific period in the history of the textile industry. These limited edition decorative fabrics generally feature portraits of illustrious figures (monarchs, politicians, military leaders, captains of industry), historical, religious or commemorative scenes, or reproductions of famous paintings, created in black and white silk on a Jacquard loom. In Catalonia, the majority of these fabrics were produced over the period between 1862 and 1974.

These Jacquard pieces, originally referred to as artistic, or “singular”, fabrics, came to the museums from private owners who recognised their value in marking a crucial period in the transformation of the textile industry. The private collectors who donated the pieces all had a direct link of some sort to textile production, whether as teachers, theorists, merchants or artists.

The fact that many of the fabrics bore the company name, the artist’s signature, the production date, or the name of the director and even the school at which they were plotted and weaved makes them, if nothing else, unique pieces, distinct from any other textile produced until that time and freely available on the market. These singular pieces also serve to illustrate the successful marriage of technology with the skill of the artist.

The perfect definition that the Jacquard system offered, with its regular alternation of one or two warps and two wefts, was the secret to obtaining pure blacks and white but also a gradient of grey shades that brought a unique luminosity and in many cases produced a relief effect, giving these fabrics their distinctive appearance.

Most Jacquard fabrics produced in this early period were for commemorative, commercial or promotional purposes, both to showcase the technical modernisation that the textile industry had undergone and to acknowledge the instruction provided by specialised schools such as the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts.

The origins of these textile images can most likely be found in the prints of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but we can also see similarities

- 1** In Catalonia, one of the leading exponents was Joan Vilatobà (1878–1954), from Sabadell, who also taught at the city's Industrial School and had a direct influence on the earliest Jacquard portraits produced there. His collection is housed largely in the Sabadell Art Museum, with a selection of photographs also held by the MNAC.
- 2** Exhibition catalogue for *La Revolució Jacquard*. Barcelona Textile and Clothing Museum and Terrassa Textile Museum, 1985.

between the artistic Jacquard fabrics produced at the turn of the twentieth century, graphic arts and the clean, professional portraits produced by photographers, on occasion calling to mind Pictorialism, a movement that spanned the period between 1890 and the end of the First World War. The artists behind this movement, such as Joan Vilatobà,¹ worked from the original photographs to create reproductions in a portrait style, creating pieces with genuine artistic value.

The portraits and other unique designs produced on Jacquard looms in Catalonia – most of them in Sabadell – are a testament to the successful adaptation of the Jacquard mechanism and its subsequent refinement by local experts.

Since 1985, the year in which the Barcelona Textile and Fashion Museum and the Terrassa Textile Museum, now the CDMT, organised a joint exhibition on the technical and artistic merits of the Jacquard system to mark the 150th anniversary its creator's birth,² no further exhibition of these fabrics or their creators was organised until December 2015, when the Sabadell History Museum announced a retrospective of work produced at the city's School of Arts and Crafts.

Who was Jacquard and what was the system he devised?

In order to fully appreciate the significance of these fabrics we must first understand the mechanics of their production and know a little about the man who gave his name to the technique. Joseph Marie Jacquard (Lyon, 1752–1834) was one of the most emblematic figures in the Lyonnaise silk industry and known around the world.

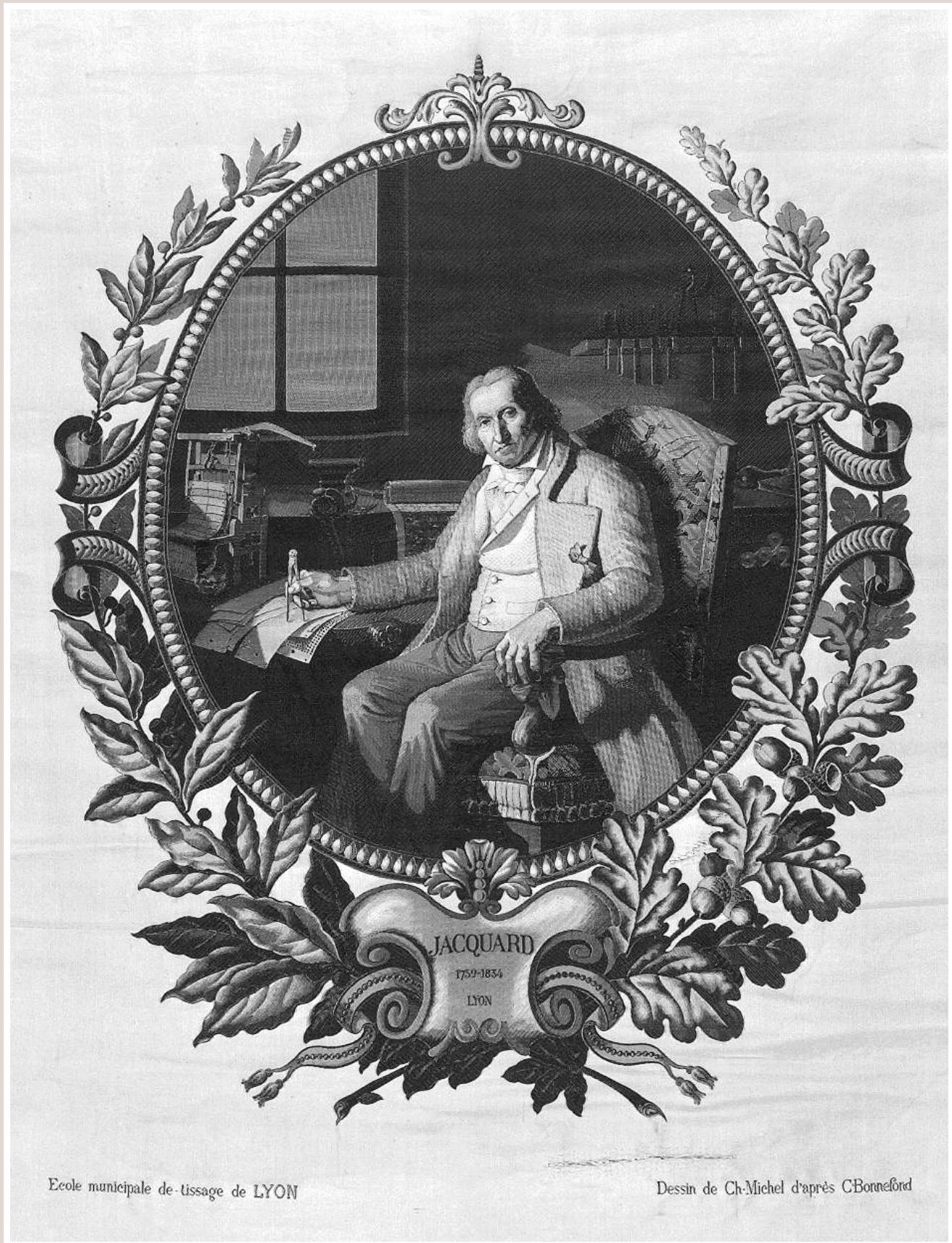
Jacquard is the generic name given to the mechanism that simplified the drawloom used until the nineteenth century to produce patterned fabrics. By the end of the eighteenth century Jacquard had devised a weaving system that developed the ideas of Bouchon – who had replaced the complex system of knots and cords of the drawloom with a more straightforward arrangement of hooks and heddles (1725) – and the subsequent enhancements introduced by Falcon – who developed punched cards in 1734 – and by Vaucanson – who pioneered the automatic cylinder that took over the role of the drawboy, in 1745. As such, Jacquard was not credited as the sole inventor of the new mechanism; rather, he studied the workings of the machines developed by his predecessors and eventually devised a system that combined elements of both the Falcon and Vaucanson designs, which he unveiled in 1801. Although the first machine did not work, he persisted with the design, introducing a series of improvements and winning the praise of Napoleon himself, who commissioned the project's



continuation. The Jacquard system greatly enhanced the manufacturing of highly complex patterned fabrics, thanks to its unique system that allowed the warp threads to be raised and lowered individually. Although considerable technical expertise was required to operate the system, it simplified procedures and lowered costs.

Mechanism

The Jacquard mechanism consists of a separate device fitted above the loom whose primary function is to enable the warp threads to be moved individually using a basic binary code of punched and unpunched holes. The drawing for the final design is set out on a sheet of special squared paper to create the cutting plan and placed on a punching machine, which codes each overlap of the warp and weft threads (the *ends* and *picks*) in a series of thin punched cards that are connected in a chain and fitted above the loom. Each pass of the weft thread activates a series of hooks, connected to heddles that control the movement of the corresponding warp threads: if the punched card is solid, it presses against the end of the heddle and the attached hook raises the warp thread; if the card contains a hole, the heddle passes through and the thread remains in place. A single card is needed for each weft row in the design.



Ecole municipale de tissage de LYON

Dessin de Ch-Michel d'après C.Bonnefond

Portrait of J.M. Jacquard. Silk. École Municipale de Tissage de Lyon, design Ch. Michel. Late nineteenth century?
CDMT 10751



▲ Souvenir from 1900 exhibition.
Silk. Société des mécaniques J.
Verdol. Lyon, 1900. CDMT 11148.

► *Immaculate Conception*,
after Murillo. Silk. France, early
twentieth century? CDMT 10747.

This system is capable of producing complex stitches and is equally suitable for large and small designs. The execution, however, is extremely complex, particularly for the artistic fabrics that concern us here. It requires a detailed knowledge of different stitches and the effects they produce depending on their position relative to the light and the use of shading. Jacquard weaving combines technical and aesthetic expertise, the artist's touch, a gift for selecting the right stitch and thread, and the weaver's ability to interpret the design. The preparatory stages – drawing the design, creating the cutting plan, punching the cards and mounting the head – were particularly time-consuming and required close collaboration between artist, designer and weaver.

Creating the cutting plan is a complex operation, the point at which the designer sets out the interlacings of the warp and weft threads; if this is not done correctly, the design will lack precision and the fabric may present imperfections. Each of the completed squares in the cutting plan represents a raised warp thread.

Since it was first devised, the technology of the Jacquard system has not ceased to evolve. The first major enhancements were made in 1858, when the Italian engineer M. Vincenzi introduced a series of changes including thinner (and cheaper) punch cards that streamlined the weaving process considerably. It was this mechanism that was most widely used in Catalonia in the early twentieth century, together with the Verdol system (from *Société Anonyme des Mécaniques Verdol*), which used a continuous roll of punched paper that was thinner than the paste-board cards and lowered production times. To fully grasp the scale of the improvements to the original Jacquard system one should consider that

³ *Industria Tèxtil*, March 1934, no. 3.

⁴ RODON FONT, Camil. *La invención de la máquina jacquard. Estudio histórico y analítico de su proceso*. Edició de Cataluña Textil, Badalona, 1919.

⁵ GARCIA BALAÑÀ, Albert. *La fabricació de la fàbrica*. Doctoral thesis. UPF, 2011.

⁶ Domènec Cavaillé or Cavallé (1771-1862). His father was from Roussillon and may have adapted his surname to Catalan. Record of the machine invented by Pierre Cavaillé (inventor) for weaving linen, hemp, silk and wool. Junta de Comerç de Barcelona, 1790-92.

⁷ Record of Domènec Cavallé i Coll, organist, son of Pere Cavallé, requesting a subsidy to introduce to Catalonia the “Jacquard” machines he has seen in Lyon, and other matters relating to his return to France. (47f). Junta de Comerç de Barcelona.

1,000 punch cards for a Jacquard loom weighed over 50 kilograms, whereas the equivalent number for the Vincenzi system weighed 15 kilos and the continuous roll for the Verdol system weighed only 2 kilos.

The enhanced Jacquard mechanism quickly spread across the rest of Europe, though its progress was not unhindered; workers opposed its use on the grounds that rendered many of them obsolete. Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century, the system had also been adopted by French manufacturers of narrow fabrics for the clothing and accessory markets.

Recognition of Jacquard’s achievements did not come immediately, but it did arrive during his lifetime, and he is now regarded as one of the forefathers of modern computer programming, his punched card system directly inspiring the binary code on which basic programming is built.

The centenary of Jacquard’s death was marked by a series of special events in Lyon, coinciding with the textile industry’s annual trade fair.³ Some years later, debate arose concerning Jacquard’s precise influence on the design and the role of his predecessors, following in-depth study by Camil Rodon Font.⁴

The arrival of the Jacquard system in Catalonia

In Catalonia, adoption of the Jacquard system was a slower but continuous process. The exact timeline varies in different accounts, and a specific date cannot be given, but by the mid-1830s the system was certainly commonplace in cotton mills and the silk industry had some “five hundred machines”⁵. The *Junta de Comerç de Barcelona*, the city’s board of trade, would soon take an interest, and in 1822 sent Domènec Cavallé⁶ Coll to Lyon to see the latest developments in textile expertise and to purchase a Jacquard machine, presumably of the latest models. Cavallé told in a letter how he had been presented to Claudio Roure, seemingly an importer of Jacquard looms, who took him to see some machines, which must have used the Jacquard system. He quickly saw the many potential uses of the new machine in all branches of textile production and in the creation of highly complicated designs,⁷ and requested funds from the *Junta* in order to purchase one. The money was duly sent, although a subsequent request was rejected. In his account it is unclear whether Cavallé eventually made the purchase. From another written record dated 1822, signed by the manufacturer Jaume Carrancà, who had been commissioned by the *Junta* to compile a report on the state of the silk industry, it can be inferred that Jacquard looms had not yet been installed in Catalonia; Carrancà suggested that they should be introduced, given the impact they could have on the quality of the resulting fabrics and the prices that could be asked for them. In the same year, there is a record of two Jacquard looms, brought to Catalonia by the French manufacturer

8 MOLAS RIBALTA, Pere. *Los gremios barceloneses del siglo XVIII*. Confederación Española de Cajas de Ahorros, Madrid, 1970.

9 CARRERA PUJAL, Jaume. *Espíritu y fuerza de la industria textil catalana*. Gremi de Fabricants de Sabadell, Institut Industrial de Terrassa. Fomento de la Producción Española, 1943.

10 CABANA, Francesc. *Fàbriques i empresaris*. Encyclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona, 1992–1994

11 Catalogue. *Bequests and donations to the museums of Barcelona, 1952–1963*. Junta de Museus, Barcelona, 1963. In 1958, Mr Sadó's grandchildren donated portrait of Pablo Sadó, drawn in lead by Pahissa and framed by Renard. Cat. no. 1461, p. 168.

12 LLANAS ANDIÑACH, Joan. "Síntesi històrica de la introducció i evolució de la màquina jacquard a Catalunya". *The Jacquard revolution*. Exhibition, Barcelona Textile and Fashion Museum, Terrassa Textile Museum, 1985. Pp. 31–33.

13 GUTIÉRREZ, Manuel María. *Comercio libre o funesta teoría de la libertad económica absoluta...* p. 135. 1834.

14 GARCIA BALAÑÀ, Albert. *La fabricació de la fàbrica*. Doctoral thesis. UPF, 2011.

15 NADAL, J. (1992), p. 123.

16 BIGORRA, Pere. *Des del vapor de la O*. Sabadell, 1974.

Joan Gras, who between 1820 and 1830 would furnish the textile factories of Barcelona with more than 400 Jacquard machines.⁸

Only a few years later, in 1826, there is reliable evidence that Jacquard looms were in use. The catalogue for a public exhibition of "Fine Arts and Industry", organised at the *Casa Llotja*, includes three handkerchiefs and shawls manufactured with a Jacquard machine that was "comparatively well known and used in various establishments in this capital".⁹

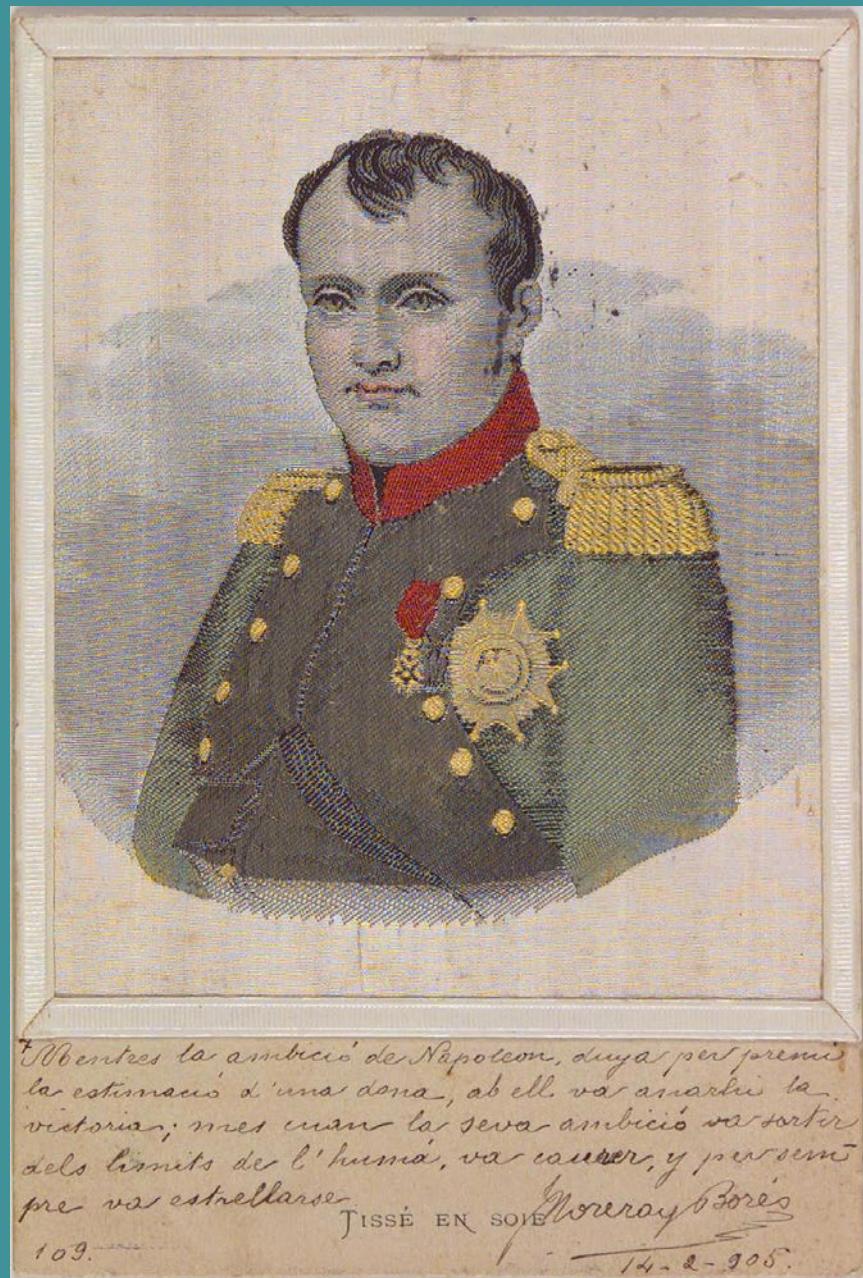
Cabana writes that it was Pierre Baurier Berchoux, from Lyon, who introduced the Jacquard system.¹⁰ Baurier was a textile merchant who arrived in Catalonia in 1820 and opened a cotton factory in Roda de Ter, which specialised in white piqué. In 1853 he was granted a five-year privilege to produce his fabrics with Jacquard looms. According to Cabana these were the first Jacquard looms in operation in Catalonia and in the whole of Spain. It would appear, however, from the evidence reported above, that the machines had in fact been introduced some years before.

Another figure who may have been responsible for bringing the system to Catalonia was Pablo Sadó Pérez (1818–1895). As recorded in the list of donations to the Art Museums of Barcelona for 1958, the year in which Sadó's grandchildren donated a portrait of him drawn by Pahissa, Pablo Sadó Pérez is recorded as the "Introducer of the Jacquard machine to Barcelona".¹¹

The system gradually became consolidated across Catalonia. In 1842 the *Junta de Comerç* reported widespread adoption of the flying shuttle and the Jacquard machine,¹² and Manuel María Gutiérrez¹³ suggests that by 1850, one of every two Catalan silk weavers, or *velers*, produced Jacquard textiles.

Garcia Balañà¹⁴ notes that official statistics for the year 1841 record 240 looms adapted to the Jacquard system, for producing mixed cotton fabrics. He adds that by 1856 this number had reached 500, with Jacquard looms now used to manufacture silks and silk blends; by 1900, some 2,400 Jacquard looms were also weaving fabrics such as linens and worsteds. Nadal¹⁵ states that by 1845 the Jacquard mechanism was being used in Terrassa, brought by Galí i Codoñet. In Sabadell, the system appears to have been introduced in 1840.¹⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century the system was largely consolidated; almost all of the Catalan silk, cotton and wool factories had several weavers operating Jacquard looms, reflecting demand from retailers, who valued the positives of the new techniques over its negatives. Firms such as Escuder, Casacuberta i Pujol, Sederies Balcells, Sederies Vilumara, Bernades, Malvehy and Bonaventura Solà i Sert had already adopted the new system by the end of the nineteenth century, using it for men's and women's clothing and for home fabrics.



¹⁷ Fabrics painted in Egypt during the Roman period or printed fabrics from the seventeenth and, in particular, eighteenth centuries.

Representation of human figures in fabric. The portrait technique applied to textiles

The representation of human figures in woven fabrics is no easy task, at least in the case of the faithful reproductions achieved in the Jacquard pieces we consider here. To find the oldest textile portraits we must look back to Coptic Egypt, where knights, hunters, ballerinas, saints and other Christian and mythological figures were produced in wool and linen tapestries; the depictions were lively, even if the features were somewhat roughly defined. On the other side of the globe, pre-Columbian cultures were using the same techniques and indigenous animal skins (alpaca, guanaco, vicuña and llama) to produce handmade clothing and textiles for their homes, featuring schematic human representations that typically had large and highly expressive eyes. By contrast, figurative depictions advanced far more rapidly in printed and painted fabrics,¹⁷ and even in the

18 *Les tableaux tissés de la fabrique Lyonnaise.*
Exposition Grand Salon de la Bibliothèque, 1922. *La Fabrique des grands hommes*, Musée des Tissus de Lyon, 2012.

19 We need only look to the Gobelins tapestries to see how such oversized, richly detailed images were created for the grand palaces of the era. The tapestry weaving technique allows each weft thread to be manipulated individually and picked as necessary to give form to faces, bodies, dresses...

20 Lampas, brocade, satin, embroidery, silk. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, nr. 2869.

21 Brocaded lampas, satin, silk, gold leaf and metal thread. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, nr. 34313.

22 Brocaded lampas, satin, silk. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, nr. 45306.

23 In particular, *Tableaux tissés de la Fabrique Lyonnaise. Exposition Salon de la Bibliothèque*. Société des Dessinateurs Lyonnais. Lyon, 1922. *Images de soie. De Jacquard à l'ordinateur*. Somogy, éditions d'art, Paris, Museum of Art and Industry, Saint-Étienne, 2004.

24 Saint-Étienne has the longest tradition of artistic weaving in France. Various firms (Faure Frères, Wolf et Granger, Bodoy et Guitton, Marcoux et Chateaneuf, Staron et Meyer, Barnola and Neyret Frères) produced fabrics depicting family scenes, moral allegories,

creation of embroidered fabrics, as they did not entail the complexities of the weaving process.

It was not until the emergence of the Lyonnaise silk industry during the eighteenth century that weavers began to produce portraits. Lyon and its surrounding area was the heartland of industrial development and textile production in France, making it the natural spearhead of this new movement.

Various authors¹⁸ concur that it was not until the work of Philippe de Lasalle that the first portraits were produced, seemingly following work with his teacher Boucher to create the cards for the Gobelins tapestries¹⁹. Surviving examples include the portraits of Catherine II of Russia,²⁰ Queen Victoria of England,²¹ Louis XV of France²² and the Count and Countess of Savoy. Lasalle presented the bust of the figure in profile, framed within an oval medallion, inspired by the portraits of the era. The French bibliography on these decorative textiles is particularly extensive²³ and introduces us to figures such as Malpertuy and Carquillat, who were renowned specialists in Jacquard portraiture.

It was in the nineteenth century, with the introduction of the Jacquard system, that the art of textile portraiture – specifically in silks – emerged.

The first Jacquard portraits were commemorative pieces and highly exclusive, but wider success was achieved by French companies such as [Neyret Frères](#), from Saint Etienne,²⁴ which began to recreate highly realistic paintings of pastoral, romantic and court scenes, weaving reproductions of eighteenth and nineteenth century works, religious images, and commemorative portraits, many of them in the form of postcards and bookmarks, which were reinterpreted by various companies.

The industry's *savoir-faire* found its way into the ribbon trade for clothing and hat manufacturers and was soon evident in department stores; by 1900 it was common to see the designer's name stitched into the taping on a waste-band, and this has evolved into the elaborate designs we see today. In Catalonia we have the example of Perramon i Badia, a company founded in Manresa in 1926, of whose work an interesting selection is conserved at the CDMT.

historical events and copies of other artworks in the period 1890–1919. Some of the designs were rewoven towards the end of the 1920s, but production was far less

prolific than in the early inter-war period. The new pieces were sold as postcards, framed to decorate homes, or used to make cushions or bags.

Duc d'Orleans. Benet Malvey.
1863. Pau Rodon Amigó collection.
Badalona Museum .



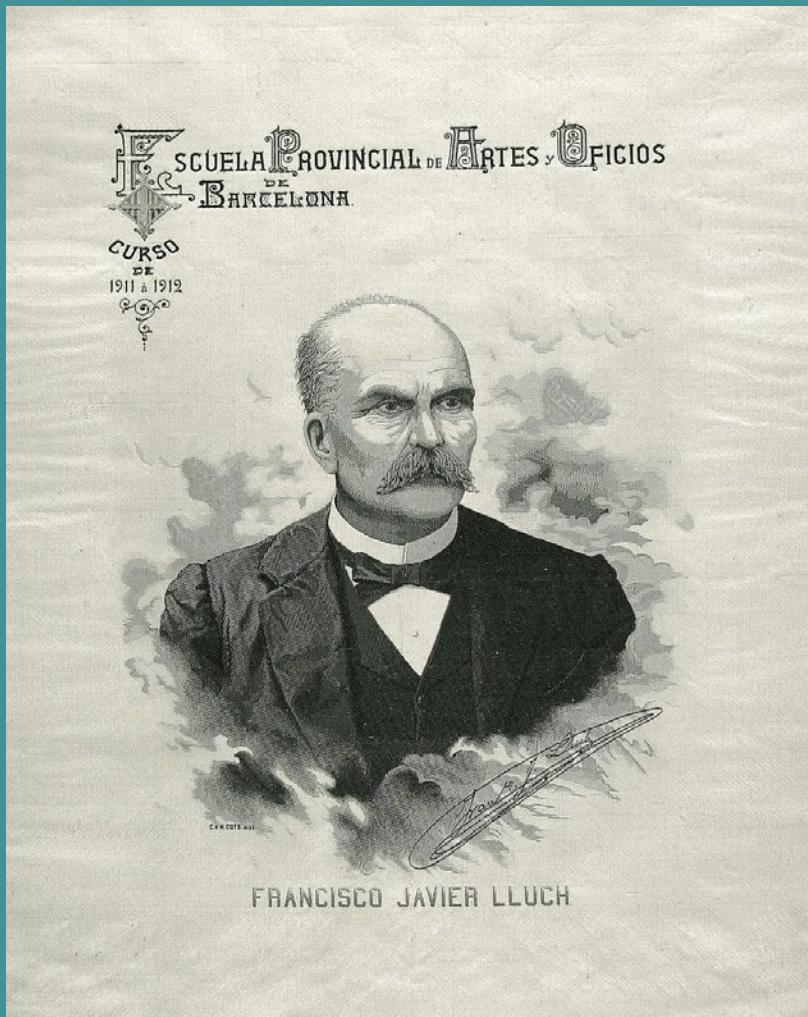
Artistic Jacquard weaving in Catalonia

25 Based on a photograph conserved at the Royal Palace in Aranjuez. In 1919, Josep Triadó donated the portraits of Isabella II, the Duke of Orleans and *La Primavera* to the FAD. The three images are published in the FAD's 1919 yearbook, p. 44 and 45.

26 The August Malvehy collection included: a portrait of Philippe de Lasalle, by Reybaud; and the Josep Malvehy collection: Philippe de Lasalle, Washington, produced by Mathevon and Bouvard, The Imperial Family (Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie) and Alexander Humboldt.

The success with which commemorative fabrics and woven silk portraits were met in France was soon enjoyed by Catalan weavers, who recognised the potential of the Jacquard mechanism for creating more artistic designs. These new textiles were not purely a commercial endeavour, nor were they produced in great quantities, as preparation was extremely costly, but the small number of pieces that were weaved in this period are highly representative of the style. The leading exponents of the technique, and descriptions of their work, are given below, while the Jacquard weaves produced at the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts will be covered in detail in a separate chapter.

The first name to mention is that of the silk merchant Benet Malvehy i Piqué (1837-1892), who is regarded as the first Catalan creator of a Jacquard portrait. The most famous works drawn and cut by his own hand are the portraits of Isabella II of Spain, which he designed in 1862 at the age of 23, the Duke of Orleans (1863), and a female figure, entitled *La Primavera*, all of them weaved in silk. The quality of Malvehy's products and his skill as an artist found favour with the Spanish monarchy, particularly after the unveiling of his portrait of Isabella II in 1862,²⁵ for which he received the Order of Charles III. Malvehy, like many of his descendants, was also a collector of these fabrics.²⁶



▲ *Ntra Sra de los Desamparados*. Silk. C. i H. Cots. Duato Sales S. en C. Valencia, 1923. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum.

◀ Portrait of Francesc Xavier Lluch. Silk. Provincial School of Arts and Crafts of Barcelona, 1911–1912. CDMT 10721.

²⁷ Who published the *Tratado teórico-práctico de la fabricación de tejidos*, in 1852, the first specialist publication of its type since the invention of the Jacquard system, to which a specific section is devoted.

²⁸ Manjarrés refers to this portrait, but we have been unable to locate a surviving example. From MANJARRÉS, Ramon. *La Il·lustració Catalana*, 15-3-1890, pp. 69–70.

²⁹ We assume that this was Josep Antoni Muntadas, founder of La España Industrial.

Francesc Xavier Lluch i Gros (1818–1889)²⁷, a technician and teacher at the Barcelona School of Industry and later a lecturer in textile theory and practice and applied drawing at the Provincial School of Arts and Crafts, created several Jacquard portraits, often at the School itself as a means of demonstrating the technique to his students. His finest work won him recognition as a member of the Order of Isabella the Catholic in 1871, as well as commissions for portraits of Isabella II of Spain²⁸ and Amadeo I of Savoy, which he drew and created the cutting design for himself, the weaving done by Eduard Reig. Some years later, in January 1877, he was also made a member of the Order of Charles III for his [portrait of Alfonso XII](#), for which he again created the original drawing and the Jacquard design, as a commission for the College of Silk Art in Barcelona, where it was manufactured in 1875–76. Lluch i Gros also designed the portraits of Fortuny and Josep Antoni Muntadas,²⁹ as well as a number of other portraits (the subjects currently unknown) which he is known to have woven at the Provincial School of Arts and Crafts of Barcelona, with the help of his students.

The artist, professor and textile theorist Camil Cots i Ferrerri (1848–1934) was, in turn, commissioned to create a portrait of Francesc Xavier Lluch i



Àngel Guimerà

Portrait of Àngel Guimerà. Silk. Barcelona? Early twentieth century. CDMT 10829.



▲ Portrait of Maria Christina of Austria, Queen Regent of Spain. Silk. Monjo i Xirinachs. Later nineteenth century, early twentieth century. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum. [See more](#).

► Portrait of Alfonso XIII. Silk. C i H Cots. Late nineteenth century, early twentieth century. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum.



30 Signed by Camil and Higinio Cots. A silk fabric, using the sfumato technique characteristic of this form of textile, through the gradual transition from heavy to light stitching to create subtle effects of light and shade (one silk warp thread and two wefts, one white and one black).

31 The College often produced its invitations in Jacquard cloth. The CDMT has a surviving example, reg. no. 10714.

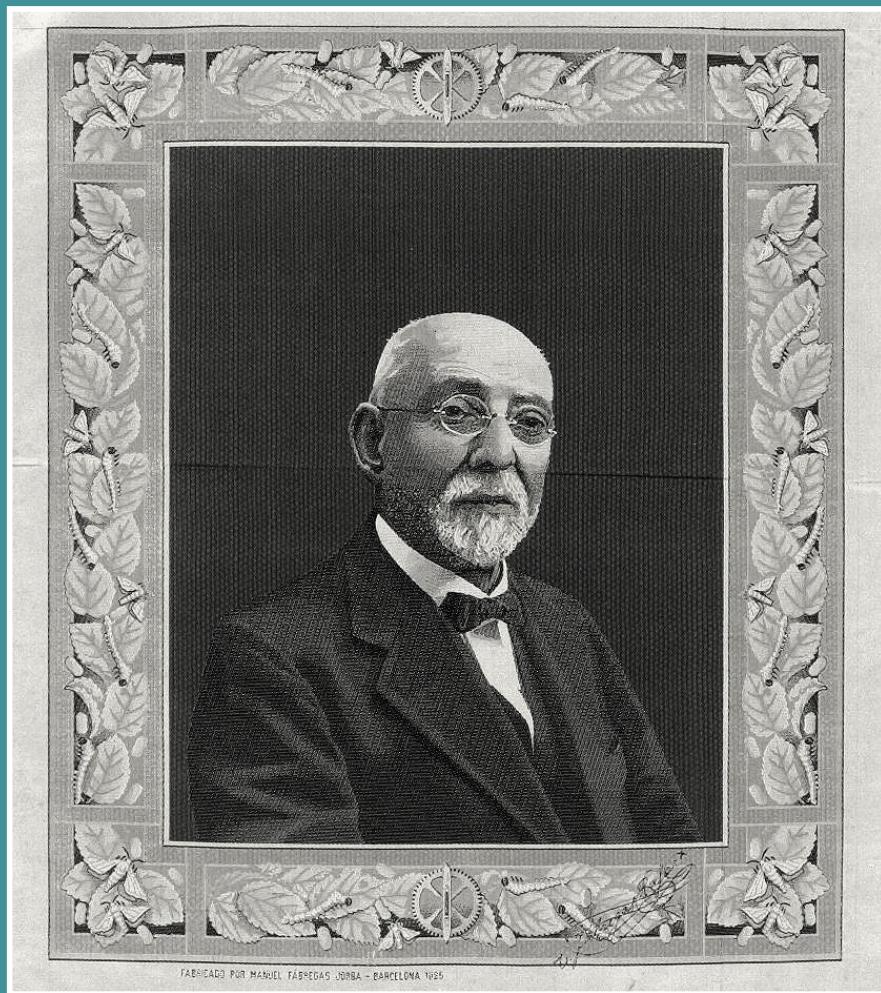
32 MOLAS, op. cit.

33 Molas Josep, "El dibuix en el teixit", *Industria Textil*, Barcelona, January 1924.

Gros, which he wove together with his students at the Provincial School of Arts and Crafts over the course of the 1911-1912 academic year, as a tribute to his former teacher.³⁰ Cots also produced a portrait of Alfonso XIII, an invitation issued by the College of Silk Art,³¹ manufactured by the Vilumara silk firm in 1904, and a portrait of queen regent Maria Christina, wove by Monjo i Xirinachs in Barcelona. He also created the design of *Our Lady of the Foresaken* for the Jacquard portrait *Coronacion Pontificia de Ntra. Sra. de los Desamparados*, wove by M. Duato Sales in Valencia in May 1923.

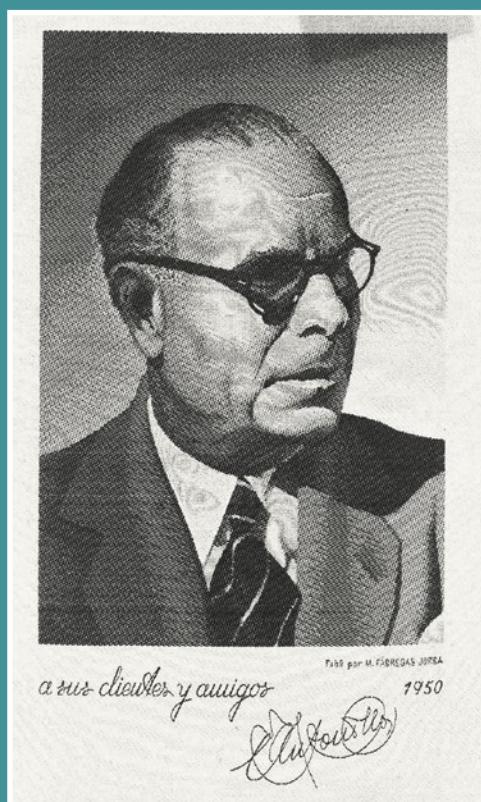
Camil Cots, "a veteran among textile artists",³² said that to be a good artist one had to know exactly what a textile was. He knew from experience that it was essential to understand each of the operations involved in preparing the warp and weft, to know how to assemble and disassemble a Jacquard loom or similar Systems. He also knew that even this knowledge was not sufficient, and that the artist also had to be a skilled manipulator of pencil and brush, capable of giving his imagination free reign and translating it into the cutting design for the punch cards, "a difficult and complex operation that, in turn, requires a perfect understanding of textile composition".³³

Jacquard portraits and commemorative designs became common in Catalan textile circles, particularly in the industrial sector and at various textile and art colleges. Many factory owners considered it a sign of distinction – both for their



▲ Portrait of Gaietà Fàbregas Rafart. Silk.
Manuel Fàbregas Jorba. Barcelona, 1925.
CDMT 10727.

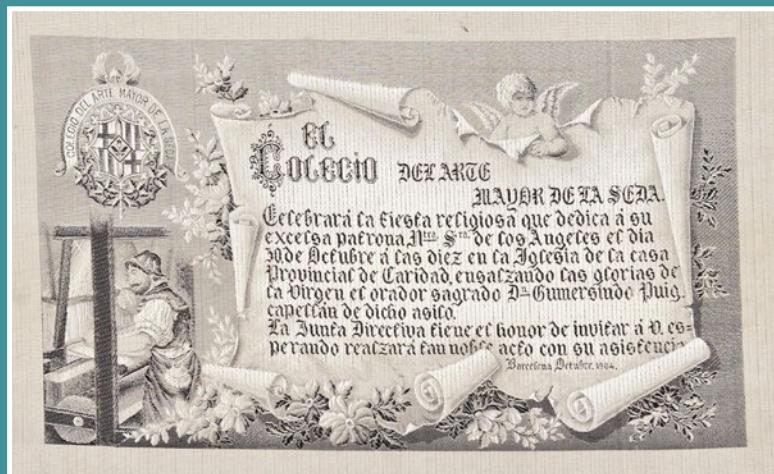
◀ Portrait of Antonio Mas. Silk. M. Fàbregas
Jorba. Barcelona, 1950. CDMT 15279.





Los productores de las empresas SAMARANCH, S. A. expresan a D. FRANCISCO SAMARANCH CASTRO su satisfacción por la concesión de la Medalla del Mérito en el Trabajo, justo coronamiento de sus bodas de oro profesionales y su ejemplar actividad humanitaria e industrial.

Mayo de 1945



▲ Invitation, College of Silk Art in Barcelona, 1904. CDMT 10716.

◀ Medal for Professional Merit. Silk. Samaranch. Barcelona, 1945. CDMT 10723.

34 The cutting plan is conserved, measuring 170 x 130 cm, as is the silk cloth, measuring 17 x 11 cm. CDMT 15279.

35 Bearing the legend: ¡Arriba España! ¡FRANCO! ¡FRANCO! ¡FRANCO! BARCELONA 1939 AÑO DE LA VICTORIA.

36 The father of Joan Antoni Samaranch, a silk merchant.

37 CDMT 8850.

38 For example, *Immaculé conception*, CDMT 10747 and 11149; *Christ crucified* by Neyret Frères, CDMT 10840; *Mater Dolorosa*, by Neyret Frères, CDMT 10839; *SS Leon XIII*, a tribute to the Roubaix Technical Institute, CDMT 15107.

companies and for themselves – to produce artistic fabric designs and to offer them as gifts to their customers. For the professional textile colleges, this new style provided challenging practical training for their students and won them greater prestige.

One of the foremost proponents of the new style was the silk company of Manuel Fàbregas Jorba, originally founded by Gaietà Fàbregas Rafart in Mollet, which weaved at least three different Jacquard portraits. The CDMT collection includes a portrait of the company's founder, made by his son Manuel in 1925, and another piece dated 1950 showing the portrait of an unknown figure, signed and dedicated to *his customers and friends*.³⁴ Finally, there survives a portrait of Franco, drawn by Ferrater i Dordal and produced in 1939.³⁵

In May 1945, the textile firm Samaranch, S.A. produced a Jacquard portrait of Francesc Samaranch Castro³⁶ to commemorate his receipt of the Spanish government's Medal for Professional Merit, coinciding with his forty-fifth anniversary with the company.

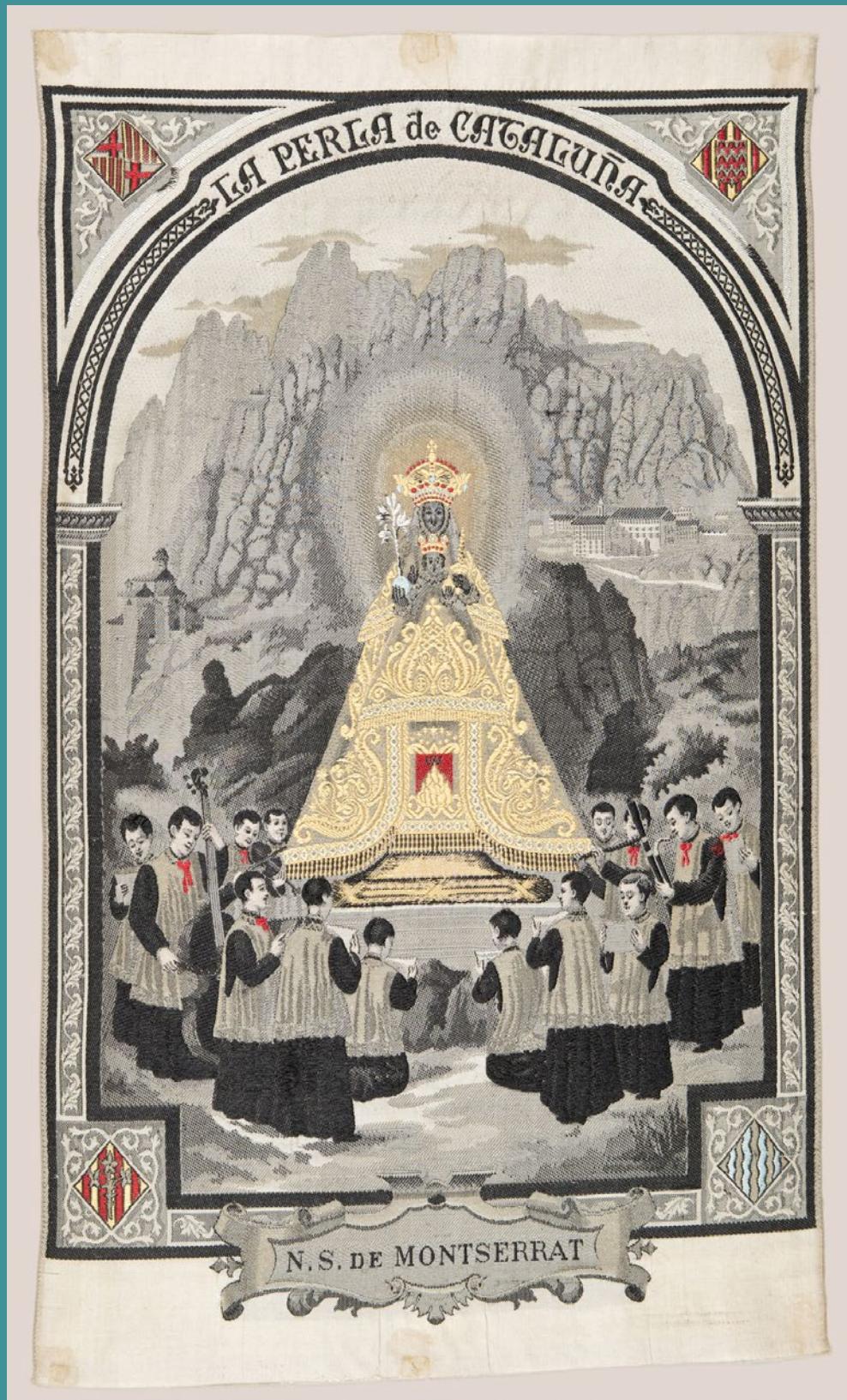
It was also common for textile firms to reproduce well-known paintings. Francesc Coll- J. Ribot, for example, created a woven copy of Velázquez's *The Spinners* as a gift for customers and friends on the occasion of the 1929 International Exhibition³⁷. The Ribot firm even produced a special silk Jacquard to notify customers of its change of address.

Vda. Fernando Carné also produced a commemorative piece for the International Exhibition, designed by Ars Tèxtil (Gràcia i Ferraté) and punched by Manuel Ferrer, although it did not match the technical perfection of Coll i Ribot. (CDMT 1729)

Religious images were also a popular choice for Catalan producers of artistic textiles, as they were for French producers.³⁸ The most frequent representation



Mare de Déu de Montserrat.
Perramon y Badia, S.A. Silk.
Manresa, 1964. CDMT 10720.



La perla de Catalunya. Silk. Early twentieth century. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum

► *Ecce Homo*, after Guido Reni. Silk. Neyret Frères, early twentieth century. CDMT 11238. [See detail](#).

▼ *Mater Dolorosa*, after Guido Reni. Silk. France? Early twentieth century. CDMT 10839.



³⁹ A copy is conserved at the Badalona Museum in the Pau Rodon Amigó collection of artistic textiles.

⁴⁰ CDMT 10720.

⁴¹ Guido Reni's *Ecce Homo* has been the subject of numerous interpretations by different companies. The Museum of Industrial Arts in Saint Etienne holds a copy, after Guido Reni, 1913. The Lleida Museum has a very similar piece, produced in tapestry.

⁴² CDMT 10829, MHS 1722.



was the *Mare de Déu de Montserrat*, but a variety of other designs were also produced, some of them in colour and of unknown authorship. The most celebrated examples are *La perla de Cataluña N.S. de Montserrat* (designer and weaver unknown),³⁹ *N.S. de Montserrat*, by Amadeu Cudisó, and Tiepolo's *The Immaculate Conception*, produced at the Escola Industrial de Sabadell; and *Regina pacis ora pro nobis Montserrat* and *Virgen del Pilar Zaragoza*, manufactured by Perramon i Badia (Manresa 1964).⁴⁰ The authorship of the *Mater Dolorosa* and *Ecce Homo*⁴¹ conserved in Catalan collections is uncertain; while the provenance of the originals is undoubtedly French, the versions that survive in Catalonia are likely to be reproductions of the French pieces.

Another piece whose origins have not been traced is the portrait of Àngel Guimerà.⁴² The fabric was clearly produced in Catalonia, and although no name can be put to its creator, it is thought to have been weaved in Sabadell, as it appeared in an exhibition at the city's History Museum in 1974 that showcased the most impressive examples of artistic Jacquard weaves produced at the School of Industry, together with the *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa* referred to above. Each of these pieces, created in silk, displays a great level of technical skill.

While the School of Industry in Sabadell took a great interest in the creation of artistic textiles, its counterpart in Terrassa produced very few pieces of which

Portrait of Alfonso XIII. Silk. Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts, 1915. CDMT 9018.



43 Acquired by the Badalona Museum, containing 131 Jacquard fabrics. Notable pieces include: *El primer pas*, *La Primavera* and the *Duke of Orleans* by Benet Malvehy, *El viarany perillós*, *Joan of Arc*, the *Virgin Mary*, *Jesus crucified*, *Flora*, Murillo's *Immaculate Conception*, portraits of Wagner, Tolstoy, Felix Faure and Paul Deroulède, various reproductions of paintings by Alonso Pérez, such as *La Pavane* or *The Fencing Lesson*, and the portraits of Maura, Romanones and Canalejas, produced at the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts.

44 RODON FONT, Camil. "El retrat aplicat al teixit". *Joventut textil*, pp. 171–172 and 176–177.

45 RODON FONT, Camil.

46 "Notas sueltas". *Cataluña Textil*, vol. IX, March 1915, no. 102. Badalona, p. 44.

we are aware. One of these is a commemorative cotton Jacquard fabric created to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the School of Textile Engineers, 1904–1954. (CDMT 10708)

The first move towards the academic study and appreciation of these unique Catalan fabrics was made by Pau Rodon and his son Camil. Pau, the founder of the Badalona Textile School and the journal *Cataluña Textil*, published an extensive body of notes on various Jacquard pieces and the technique itself and owned a sizeable collection that he had amassed over the years, which was eventually bound into a parchment volume entitled *Colecció de Teixits Artístichs*, which is now part of the Badalona Museum collection.⁴³

Camil Rodon published in *Joventut*⁴⁴ that there were two basic techniques for creating these masterpieces: the first used the taffeta base – for the cutting design – as the starting point for the shading, where the drawing effects were produced by the weft. The second technique used a satin base and the drawing effects were produced by the warp and the weft. In the first case, the portraits could not be created with the necessary complexity, and the final pieces were flat in appearance, lacking expressiveness and realism; in the second case, the relief effect and the nuances created by the shading gave the portraits a far more lifelike appearance, of photographic quality. The satin used for the second technique was weaved with a warp thread of white silk and a black silk weft with hidden stitches, giving the final design a range of tones from the deepest black through a scale of greys to pure white; the impeccable graduation of tones was reminiscent of a photographic image.

Most of the artistic Jacquard fabrics produced in Catalonia were created using the first technique, and would be dismissed by Camil Rodon as *devoid of any effect of life*. By contrast, the textile portrait of Alfonso XIII,⁴⁵ designed by Narcís Giralt and produced at the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts, was prized for the quality of the drawing, the accurate proportions and the unquestionable likeness. Even a cursory glance reveals an appreciable difference in quality between Giralt's work and the portraits of Alfonso XII, by Lluch, and Alfonso XIII, by Cots. The portrait of Alfonso XIII, weaved in Sabadell, was acquired for his personal collection by Pau Rodon, who said of the new piece: "In pride of place at the Badalona Textile School hangs the large portrait of Alfonso XIII, weaved in silk by the students of the Sabadell School of Industry, and laid out for cutting by the hand of the intelligent professor and director of that school, our distinguished and esteemed Don Narciso Giralt".⁴⁶

Reproduction of the *modernista* stained glass of the Caixa Sabadell building. Polyester. 2008. CDMT 22840.



47 The period that saw the creation of the Benet Malhey's portrait of Isabella II of Spain and the portrait of Ferran Casablancas by Agrupacions Professionals Narcís Giralt.

48 Examples are conserved at the CDMT and Sabadell History Museum.

The chronology of Catalan artistic Jacquard fabrics takes in a little over half a century, from 1862 until 1974, approximately.⁴⁷ Production of these portraits and commemorative fabrics woven in silk eventually ceased; their preparation and weaving were complex and expensive processes, and the fashion for portraits and commemorative designs had passed. One of the last artistic fabrics to be produced in Catalonia was created to mark the 150th anniversary of the Caixa Sabadell savings bank, depicting the stained glass windows of the hall in its *modernista* building; the work, in polyester, was commissioned by the bank's president at the time, Salvador Soley i Junoy, and directed by Àngel Martínez in 2008.⁴⁸ ●

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OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > [CATALÀ](#)

From a modernist design to artisan lace



■ Neus Ribas

On Sunday 10 May, Terrassa was host to the twenty-eighth Lacemakers' Day, an event organized by the Catalan Association of Lacemakers and held each year in a different Catalan city. On this special day, the CDMT and Arenys de Mar Museum, together with the Flor Alba Association of Lacemakers of Arenys de Mar, started a project to use a modernist design preserved at the CDMT to make a tablecloth border in artisan lace.

The design of the draughtsmen Gràcia and Ferrater (1908-1910), in the possession of the CDMT, is a modernist style drawing in white gouache with a diagonal composition of [roses linked together with small stalks](#).

Glòria Bilbeny, an expert card puncher, drew a border based on this original design and punched the pattern. When the pattern was ready, Assumpta Riera of the Flor Alba Association of Lacemakers of Arenys de Mar, made the lace which Nuria Coll (another member of the Flor

Alba Association) then sewed onto the linen fabric. To make this tablecloth the three experts put in a total of 100 hours of work.

This little project is a look into the past, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, when factories produced magnificent pieces in a new aesthetic language for the bourgeoisie, who used them to adorn their houses. This combination of textile heritage and craftsmanship was presented on 10 May in Terrassa, and it can now be seen in a video posted on Arenys de Mar Museum's [YouTube](#) channel. ■

Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > [ESPAÑOL](#)

Traditional textiles of Cantabria

Rafael Fernández Fernández.
Published by Textil Santanderina.

ISBN: 978-84-95742-80-3

■ Assumpta Dangla

This study is the result of an extensive research project conducted over three decades by the textile expert Rafael Fernández. For many years, the author has visited the most remote regions of Cantabria to document and gain first-hand experience of traditional textile techniques, which manage to survive – even on a very small scale – in the north of Spain.

The book is divided into chapters in order to draw attention to this rich textile legacy, which has been passed down for generations. The author's first question is "How?": he answers by carefully detailing the materials and processes involved in textile production, from the procurement of the raw materials to the finished product. A photographic section contains hitherto unpublished images of weavers engaged in the laborious task of spinning to produce furnishings and fabrics.

In the second part, the author asks the questions "Who, when, where?", in a journey through the history of textiles, from its early days, through the Neolithic, the Bronze Age, and the Roman Empire up until the present.

At the end of this demanding but rewarding project, the author has added a series of interesting appendices. Here he stresses the



significance of the profession of spinning and weaving, carried out by so many anonymous people over the centuries in the lands of Cantabria. The author's study is based on first-hand documentation and oral memory, and offers an ethnological account of a profession and its people. Thanks to his experience and training and his excellent powers of expression, he offers a highly interesting portrait of the most varied aspects of textiles and its creators. It is a story that rescues the memory of so many people dedicated to an art which, although virtually obsolete today, is brought back to life in this book. ■

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OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > CATALÀ

CHINA: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Andrew Bolton et al.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015

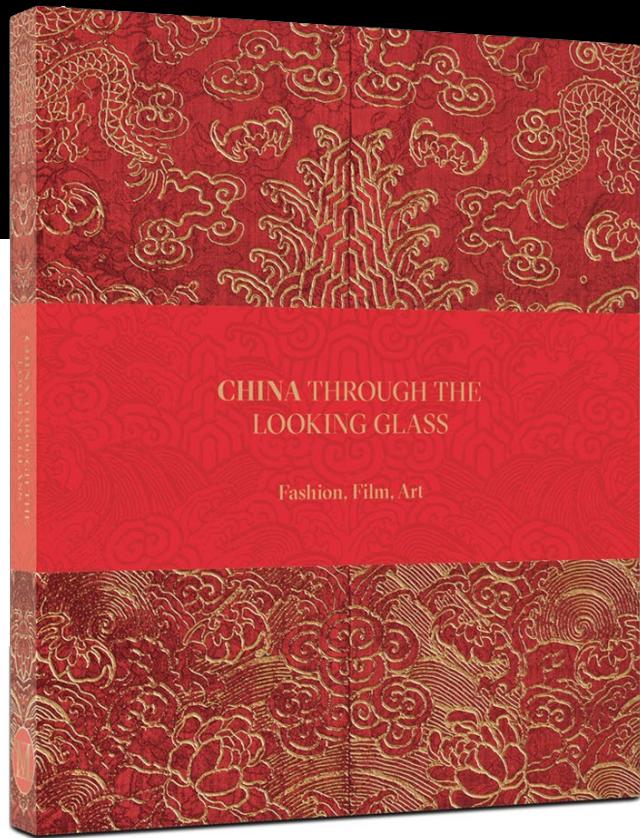
ISBN: 978-0-300-21112-2

■ Eulàlia Morral

“Like moon in the water, image on a mirror / It comes and goes, with no inherent reality”. The couplet, written by the poet Pei Xiu, and quoted by the filmmaker Wong Kar Wai in his brief introduction to this new volume, perfectly captures the essence of a journey into the long-standing Western fascination with Chinese aesthetics. Our guide is Wong Kar Wai, artistic director, together with Met curator Andrew Bolton, designer Nathan Crowley, and the photographer Platon, the creative team behind the exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in spring 2015, which has been beautifully captured in this guide.

The exhibition centres around the theme of the looking glass, and the masterful selection of exhibits are presented here as if mirror images; on one page the original piece, on the opposite page the creation or creations it inspired. The photographs are works of art in their own right and are unspoiled by textual adornment (the details are given in a separate chapter), transporting us to that fantastical realm to which cinema has made such a distinct contribution, from *Son of the Dragon* to *Shanghai Express*, *Farewell my Concubine* and *The Last Emperor*.

Mirroring the exhibition structure, the book is divided into two parts: *Emperor to Citizen* (imperial, nationalist and communist China) and *Empire of Signs* (bodies, spaces and enigmatic objects). Porcelain, calligraphy, decorative objects and Chinese formal dress from the last few centuries are joined by paintings, advertisements, perfumes, and haute couture pieces by some of the foremost names in contemporary and twentieth-century Western fashion: Balenciaga, Christian



Dior, Alexander McQueen, Vivienne Tam, Jean Paul Gaultier, Yves Saint Laurent, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Dries van Noten, Paul Poiret, Isabel Toledo, Jean Patou...

Short texts complementing the exhibition's main focus are provided by the rest of the team: “A Dialogue Between East and West” (Maxwell K. Hearn), “Toward an Aesthetic of Surfaces” (Andrew Bolton), “A Chamber of Whispers” (Adam Geczy), “Fashioning China” (Harold Koda), “Imagery of Chinese Dress” (Mei Mei Rado) and “Cinema’s Virtual Chinas” (Homay King).

There is no scope in this brief review to comment on each of the texts in detail. Nevertheless, Andrew Bolton – unquestionably the exhibition’s *alma mater* – discusses the eternal game of mirrors through which East and West eye one another, engaging in a mutual transformation that fails to penetrate beyond the surface. Adam Geczy, meanwhile, examines the many faces

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of *Orientalism*, moving from domination to exchange, finally arriving at interpenetration. This is by some distance the most philosophical of the texts, and is all the most fascinating for it, defining the concept of *Transorientalism* as the combination of three facets whose precise interplay is informed by trade, tourism, production (working conditions are appalling in much of what we consider the ancient East, a fact attributable not only to Western companies but also to the governments themselves) and reinterpretation through design, primarily in the fashion sector. One might argue, in fact, that the East continues to be *orientalized*, driven by the currents of globalization.

Harold Koda examines the assimilation of Chinese imagery in the West, through discoveries, trade links and artistic movements. Mei Mei Rado discusses traditional Chinese dress, considering how it has been portrayed in engravings and paintings, how it has evolved since 1911, and how

it is evoked by contemporary Chinese artists. Finally, Homay King looks at the virtual China we see recreated in cinema: “the lens through which many of us first discover unknown places; artists and designers who take inspiration from Chinese aesthetics often do so through cinema, rather than through reality”.

Those who still have questions about the exhibition’s themes will be greatly illuminated by Andrew Bolton’s interview with John Galliano, who explains his lifelong affinity with China, first through the lens of Hollywood and later first-hand, through extensive international travel that has also taken him to Mongolia and Russia. There is an interesting comparison to be made between the creative process – interiorization and abstraction – and meditation, and the interview gives a fascinating insight into the designer’s ability to absorb and deconstruct original ideas to create original forms that, through new, do not altogether mask their sources. ■

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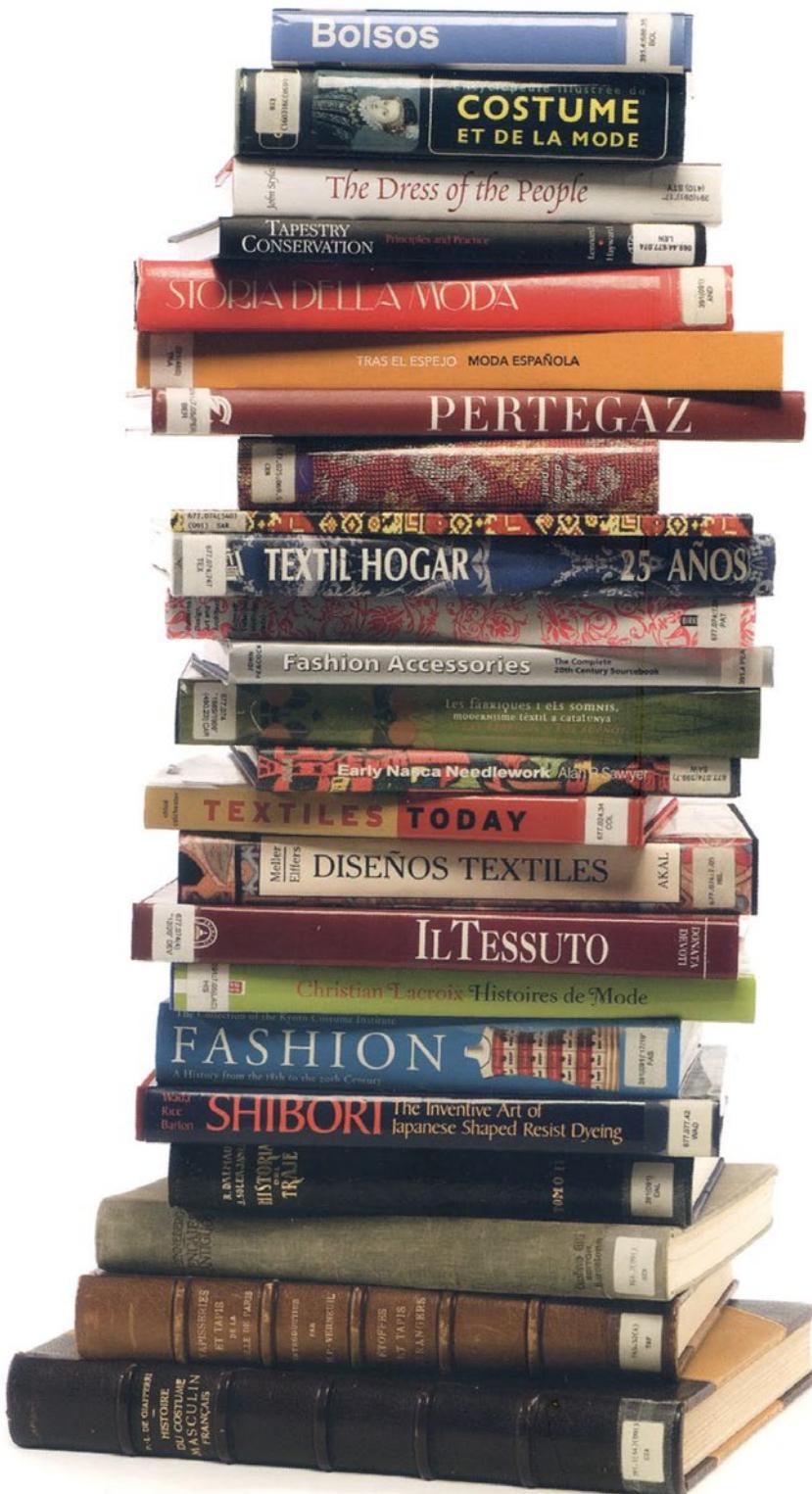
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