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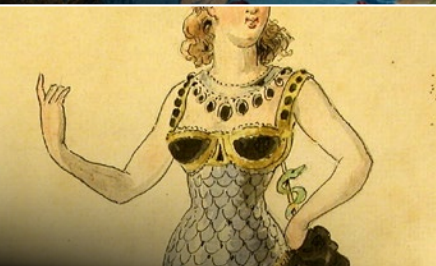
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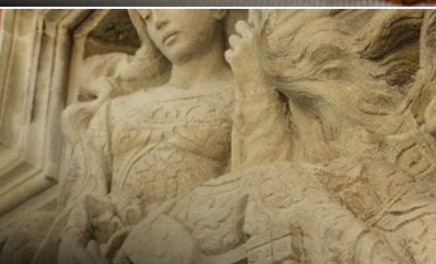
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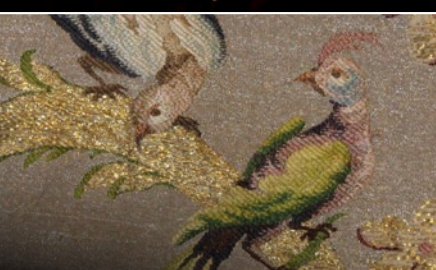
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Baroque textile art for the adornment of religious figures

by SANTIAGO ESPADA, Art Historian
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¹ BASTIDA DOS SANTOS, A. F., *Los tejidos labrados de la España del Siglo XVIII y las sedas imitadas del arte rococó en Minas Gerais (Brasil. Análisis, formas y analogías. (Doctoral thesis). Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. 2009. pp. 50-142.*

Throughout the Christian liturgical year, dressed figures of the Virgin Mary, Christ and other saints from the heavenly court, from dioceses in eastern Spain, are adorned before they are placed in their respective niches and altars, or prepared for novenas, ceremonial kissing of the feet, processions and other liturgical acts. Their attire is rich in historical detail and constitutes valuable cultural heritage in the field of the decorative arts. A study of the attire produced for religious statuary reveals changes over time, and enables us to reflect on the importance of these works of textile art. Each piece is of great historical and artistic value, full of symbolism, and a window on the historical evolution of fashions, of aesthetic and formal transformations, and other social, economic and technical developments. Taking a selection of the most significant examples, this paper aims to give voice to these unique textile treasures and their expression of faith and ostentation. They form a singular body of cultural heritage, yet one that is little valued and largely unknown. These works warrant greater appreciation and must be conserved for future generations, to combat the loss of expertise and the inappropriate restoration that is driving them towards extinction.

Dressed religious figures are a subgenre within sculpture that emerged mainly in the Late Middle Ages. In creating these statues, the work of the sculptor was primarily that of the head and hands. The conical internal frame was constructed with some degree of articulation, and the rest of the statue was left unfinished so that it could be completed by a dresser. The dresser used textiles and decorative elements of precious metalwork to finish the artistic endeavour begun by the sculptor, so that merit for the final appearance of the icon was shared. The need for a second artist to complete the religious figure led sculptors such as Francisco Salzillo or Nicolás de Bussy to take an active interest in the task, giving precise instructions on the appropriate attire for their work and the materials that should be used to create it. In Spain, where the spirit of the Counter-Reformation had a profound impact, after the Council of Trent (1545) and into the early part of the seventeenth century the production of dressed statues grew exponentially¹. However, it was in the Baroque period,

Baroque textiles for earthly and heavenly royalty. Left, detail of a portrait of Catherine of Habsburg-Lorraine and Queen of Naples. Source: Museo del Prado. Right, tunic of Our Lady of Grace (Murcia). Source: S. Espada.



2 PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, M, *La magnificencia del culto. Estudio histórico-artístico del ornamento litúrgico en la diócesis de Cartagena*. Alfonso X el Sabio. Obispado de Cartagena. Murcia. 1997. pp. 202-203. BACCHI, A., COLLARETA, M., DESMAS, A. MONTAGU, J., SICCA, C., YARRINGTON, A, *Vestire le statue. Arte, devocione e committenza nella Toscana nord-occidentale*. Pisa University Press. Pisa. 2016.

when changing tastes brought new approaches to religious iconography, that these statues took on a more richly adorned and opulent appearance². Dressed figures of the Virgin Mary and Christ, under their various names, were powerful instructional vehicles that bolstered Catechism and brought greater devotion from parishioners. Therefore, these statues required clothing that was worthy of their heavenly status, with no detail overlooked, and whose magnificence and propriety were carefully watched over in the synodic constitutions from the sixteenth century onwards, to safeguard the boundary between the earthly and the divine. In addition, the contemporaneity of the sacred attire – a device we find in religious representations produced by Flemish painters and Italian Renaissance artists – enabled a slight transformation towards a more human appearance that was more accessible to the faithful. The luxurious fabrics used in the creation of the clothes, drawn almost from the new “fashions” of the Renaissance, were illustrative of status and power. Clearly the Virgin Mary and Christ did not wear such sumptuous attire, but the richness was entirely justified since, as Fray Luis de Ledesma wrote, “*it is right to diverge from the historical truth to educate the simplest spirits, as the richness of the clothes is an indication of glory in heaven*”.

Our Lady of Grace and Good Will adorned with Baroque textiles in the eighteenth-century style. Source: A. Romero (See detail).



3 OLIVARES GALVAÑ, P., “La Seda en Murcia en los Siglos XVI al XVIII” in Seda. Historias Pendientes de un hilo. Murcia, siglos x al XXI. Editum. Murcia. 2017. p. 38.

Lustrous silk, velvet, damask, gold and silver threads, brocade and fine embroidery were the mediums, materials and techniques preferred by brotherhoods and devotees for the majestically dressed figures of the Virgin and Christ. However, these historical textile creations are more than just mere items of clothing to cover the nudity of their statues. They are works of art of great significance, with a rich history of their own, encapsulated in and expressed through decorative motifs determined by the trends of each period. Each piece was executed with such technical skill and artistry that they can be considered alongside haut-relief and painting. The main decoration on this clothing was formed by floral and plant motifs, rich in symbolism associated with the Virgin Mary and the Passion (including roses, thistles, acanthus, vine and palm leaves) as well as the iconography of the Virgin Mary and *Arma Christi*. Thus, when a patron or devotee made an offering of a robe for Our Father Jesus or the Virgin, the statue was imbued with an expressiveness on which the faithful were invited to reflect. These items of textile art, donated to request the assistance, favour or intercession of the Virgin and the Saints, can only be understood in the context of a deeply religious society in which faith permeated all aspects of daily life³.

The attire of the religious statues considered in our study is characterised by two aspects: contemporaneity and significance. It was contemporaneous in the sense that the clothing was made with fabric and embroidery work strongly influenced by the royal, courtly aesthetic that was popular at the time: in this case, French, Bourbon, Baroque style, which had been common in Spain since the sixteenth century.

Robe "of the arrival" of Our Father Jesus of Nazareth, from Huércal-Overa. Producer unknown, attributed to the studio of Agustinas Recoletas in Murcia. Ca. 1745. Source: S. Espada. [See more.](#)



The significance of the attire of a religious statue is revealed in its colours and decorative motifs, which are charged with symbolism and iconography relating to the Virgin Mary (such as the Litanies) and the Passion (for example, the *Arma Christi*). The Virgin Mary is the queen of heaven and earth, and to stress this sovereign status over the faithful her statue was dressed in a manner befitting any other queen of Europe. It therefore comprised a voluminous skirt, a close-fitting top or bodice – both in a clearly French style – and a royal cape, richly adorned with lace and silver and gold braiding, as well as ornate blonde lace or lace edging arranged in the form of a triangle, as a symbol of the Holy Trinity or the Holy Mountain. Although contemporary fabrics were used, Christ's attire was closely associated with the Holy Scriptures, thus his robes were heavily symbolic, and often albs or long tunics sometimes with a long tail to emulate Venetian royal capes. They unequivocally projected the regal status of the figure depicted.



4 RAUSELL ADRIÁN, F.X., *Indumentària tradicional valenciana, matèries primeres color i ornamentació en la roba tradicional*, Andana Editorial, València, 2014. p. 268.

The textile art in our study is divided into two principal areas: patterned fabrics (brocade and broché) and embroidered fabrics.

The patterned fabrics presented a wide range of designs based mainly on floral motifs. In the early eighteenth century, the influence of the Eastern aesthetic can be seen in these fabrics, particularly in what were known as *bizarros*. These were characterised by an unnatural reality verging on abstraction, and on the Baroque aesthetic that predominated across Europe, accentuated by the accession of the Bourbons to the Spanish throne.

The designs were drawn from work produced in other major centres of textile production, particularly in Italy and, above all, in France⁴. Lyon was among the foremost textile cities in Europe, leading the way in forging trends and with a wealth of designers working for the commercial market. Their designs were adapted to the Spanish taste, bringing new decorative motifs and opening new channels of national distribution. Though the most common adornments were flowers, bows, laces, garlands and branches, some new elements could be found such as **birds** or vases, the latter forming rhomboid compositions that were generally symmetrical. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, examples of emerged of vase designs without the earlier symmetry.

An analysis of Spanish designs, particularly Valencian designs from the eighteenth century, shows considerable changes compared to the previous century, in which we can identify two broad adaptations to new tastes. In the first half of the eighteenth century, elongated leaves continued to be used but were more widely spaced, interspersed with elements of Baroque decoration and

Bodice and dress of the Virgen of Carmen (Murcia). Attributed to a studio in Valencia or Barcelona. Eighteenth century. Source: catalogue: "La virgen del Carmen, devoción y culto" (2008).



Cape of the Virgin of Grace (Murcia). Possibly from a studio in Valencia. Eighteenth century. Asymmetric branches combine with laces and ribbons in an undulating, rhomboidal pattern. Source: S. Espada.



5 DE ARTIÑANO, Pedro Miguel, *Catálogo de la exposición de tejidos españoles anteriores a la introducción del Jacquard*. Sociedad Española de Amigos del Arte. Madrid, 1917. p. 22.

arranged symmetrically but not always in a rhomboidal pattern. Later, in the second half of the eighteenth century, asymmetrical motifs were popularised, bringing geometrically founded compositions⁵ created using three bobbins.

Greater thematic complexity emerged, and though decorative elements were inherited from the seventeenth century, they were developed according to the new trends established by French manufacturers, who maintained the prevailing naturalism of the earlier period but introduced greater symmetry into their designs. Wavy designs were combined with vertical strips and rhomboidal patterns. Undulating floral themes and central spaces occupied by branches in a naturalistic style were juxtaposed with baskets or Baroque decorations of bows and laces.



Embroidered tunic and bodice of Our Lady of the Rosary. Convent church of Santa Ana de Murcia. Studio of MM Dominicas of Santa Ana (Murcia). Ca 1755-1760. Source: S. Espada.

6 In fine embroidery, the gold and silver threads do not pass through the medium. Several types of embroidery stitches are used to attach them to the piece.

As in the case of patterned textiles, embroidered Baroque fabrics feature abundant floral and plant motifs that twist and intertwine⁶. Borders of thistles, roses with thorns or acanthus leaves, depicted in close detail and always in relief work, generating textures that lend depth to the motifs. Bows, ribbons and lace also appear as decorative elements. Undulating and ascending structures are frequently bound by branches, which may be symmetrical or asymmetrical.

These many examples of textile art reveal great technical and artistic skill. They speak to the complexity of the maker's task, akin to that of the artist, which required the *sketching and painting*, thread by thread, of painstaking and sometimes exclusive designs that stood the test of time, many being used well into the nineteenth century or adapted to new aesthetic tastes. ●

Embroidered cape of the Virgin of Solitude (Murcia). Anonymous studio. Eighteenth century. Restored by Sebastián Marchante. Branch between undulating geometric structures, tied with a bow. The piece is given depth by the use of texture. Source: S. Marchante.



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Theatre costumes: A look at the collections of the Catalan Museum of Performing Arts (MAE)

by CARME CARREÑO, curator at the MAE,
and LAURA ARS, graduate in Art History

Creating a character

¹ VOLTAS, Jordi,
El vestuario, La Galera,
Barcelona, 1991.

² “Exoticism”, which is a
term belonging to the time
in question, was a product
of an imperialist society and
mindset that we do not share.

³ Tórtola Valencia Bequest
(1882 -1955). Tórtola Valencia
was an ‘exotic’ dancer raised
in London by a Catalan father
and an Andalusian mother.
Her professional career
spanned the period from 1908
to 1930, during which she
became a model of beauty.
She merged oriental dance
with Spanish folklore to create
dances such as *La Tirana*.
The MAE has 108 articles of
clothing out of a total of 1,575
objects including photos,
postcards, oils, albums of
press clippings, etc.

*“To put on a costume is to dress up as a character: one must inhabit the
clothing as one inhabits the character.”*

Lydia Azzopardi¹

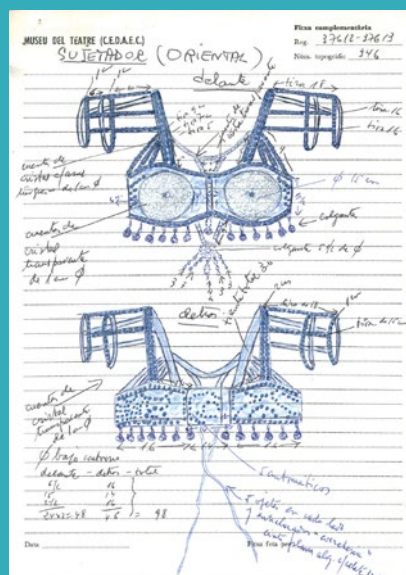
When we call to mind a play, it is the actors who appear in the memory. Acting steals the limelight, eclipsing all the behind-the-scenes professions that have made the performance possible, credible and emotionally engaging. By dressing actors, for example, the costume designer plays a hugely active role in the challenging task of creating characters. Through costumes, actors must feel that they are the characters they embody, transforming themselves and becoming someone they are not in order to take on the trappings of another person’s life.

Conveying the message

Every costume designer has an individual methodology when it comes to constructing character, and the MAE collections contain samples that illustrate the full variety. In her quest for exoticism² and colour, the dancer Tórtola Valencia³, for instance, succeeded in turning prêt-à-porter into unique, magnificent articles of clothing, blending fabrics that transported audiences to foreign lands and remote, opulent and sensual worlds. She did not design; she constructed. Experience was her studio and her alterations were pure intuition, enhancing comfort and flexibility through ceaseless trial and error. She not once renounced magnificence, simplicity was unknown to her, and the sight of her fabrics evoked riches, the ecstasy of Greek temples and the thousand and one nights of dreams. Valencia was a master of body language, understood aesthetics, and has left us a major collection of free bodies and corseted figures that span the fashions of the twentieth century.



Costume by Tórtola Valencia for the ballet *La Bayadère*: signed photograph and design sketch, 1915. [See detail](#) and [more](#).



Designs by Maria Araujo
for *Amadeus*, awarded the Max
Award for Spanish Scenic Arts,
2009.



4 RIUS, Claudia, *Curiositats sobre el vestuari de l'Avar*, Núvol, L'apuntador, 31 January 2017.
<https://goo.gl/uUY1yp>.

“My work is thankless: when it is done well nobody sees it, and when it is done poorly everybody takes note.”

Maria Araujo⁴

The MAE collections conserve nearly half of all the output of another woman who chooses her fabrics meticulously, the designer Maria Araujo. Araujo studies the fashion and reality of the period being represented and works painstakingly on even the most intimate details. The actors are subsumed into the time machine of her costumes. She studies the body, takes its measure, and dresses the character in what will be only one more piece – but, like all the other pieces, a crucial one – in the precise jigsaw puzzle that is the show.



Design by Francesc Soler i Rovirosa and photograph of a costume for the ballerina Pauleta Pàmies, for *Lohókeli* at the Teatre Tívoli, Barcelona, 1882. Photograph: A. Torija.



From role to fabric

5 Francesc Soler i Rovirosa Collection (1836-1900).

Francesc Soler i Rovirosa was one of the foremost set designers of the nineteenth century. He renewed stage machinery in Catalonia. Of his output, 1,400 items are conserved.

There is an unshakable linkage between wardrobe and the text from which the actors – though not solely the actors – draw great benefit. Design sketches and illustrations are a means of expression that seeks to translate the director's idea faithfully into fabric, even if the reality of what is ultimately made often differs. A costume fulfils two related missions: one is obviously to shape a character by dressing the actor, but the other is to show or convey the director's message to the audience. It is not necessary to honour the historical time of the text, nor is it unforgivable to decontextualise the period. The aim is to enable the codes of communication to flow with delicacy and skill. Roles, however, do not share the physical and financial limitations of costume-making, which requires seeking out textures, colours and volumes that are not always within reach, are sometimes merely the product of the artist's imagination, and yet must be turned into a real article of clothing. Fine examples are offered by the designs of Francesc Soler i Rovirosa.⁵

6 ECHARRI, Marisa, SAN MIGUEL, Eva, *Vestuario teatral*, Naque Editora, 1998.

7 Enric Borràs Collection (1863–1957). Enric Borràs was a legendary actor remembered for playing the role of Manelic in *Terra Baixa*. He took Catalan theatre to Spain and the New World. He formed a theatre company with Margarida Xirgu that created synergies from their mutual involvement. The MAE has roughly a hundred items, including the actor's own costumes.

8 Fabià Puigserver (1938–1991). Set designer, costume designer, theatre actor and director, and founder of the theatre Teatre Lliure, Fabià Puigserver is considered to be a significant force for renewal in Catalan theatre. The MAE collections house over a thousand pieces of costume design produced throughout his professional career.

As Marisa Echarri and Eva San Miguel show in their book *El Vestuario teatral*,⁶ all staging calls for planning, a production schedule and management; that is, a ceaseless battle against the threat of a deadline and the terror of a budget. In light of all this, it is clearly necessary to achieve perfect coordination among a team whose members have different profiles. Costume design must be broken down into the artistic team (designer) and the technical team (the costume workshop and the theatre's tailor, who is a member of the stage production staff). The designer is an artist who develops the overall idea, starts work when a text is put forward and finishes when the play opens. Similarly, the costume workshop – usually a private firm – finishes on the opening day, but cannot start work until the designs or illustrations are received. Lastly, the tailor is concerned with day-to-day performance, assisting on stage in costume changes and so on. The tailor's work begins when the costumes reach the theatre and continues throughout the run of the show.

The value of theatre costumes

Theatre costuming on a proscenium stage has two major allies in distance and lighting, which can transform the way a body is ultimately perceived. Traditionally, theatre costumes have not been valued as textiles because they are quickly resolved or constructed over the body, created without pretensions of excellence of production or precision in the cut or treatment of the fabric. The earliest actors in major companies, such as the company of Enric Borràs,⁷ had their own wardrobe, reflecting the quality standards of that period. As the twentieth century progressed, however, quality gave way to effect. Technological advances, such as those of lighting, made it possible to create characters and costumes without putting so much effort into individual items of apparel, but instead drawing on grand visual effects that had once relied on fabrics. Over time, spotlights on stage gained in importance over the preceding century's embroidery and lace, illuminating new, cheaper and simpler materials that were much less extraordinary.

Not until the arrival of the director, set designer and costume designer Fabià Puigserver⁸ in the nineteen-seventies was a taste for textile production, detail and quality revived. Because of the new proximity of the audience, costuming overtook set design, going beyond its own particular function of dressing the actor and now playing a role in the creation of an atmosphere and the evocation of a time and space.



Design by Fabià Puigserver
for *Lorenzaccio* and photograph
of Juanjo Puigcorbé at the Teatre
Lliure, Barcelona, 1987.
Photograph: Ros Ribas.





Photograph: Ros Ribas.

Dance and the plastic arts

⁹ SERRA, Laura, *Vestuari de dansa, peça de museu*, *Diari Ara*, 21 December 2013. <http://goo.gl/9Y56YW>.

¹⁰ Gelabert-Azzopardi Company Collection. The company, under the direction of Cesc Gelabert and Lydia Azzopardi, has been the recipient of several awards, such as the Spanish National Prize for Dance in 1997 and the Butaca Award in 2011 for its performance of *Belmonte*. The collection contains 275 objects from costumes to accessories, the majority made by Lydia Azzopardi herself.

¹¹ “El estilo ecléctico de Lydia Azzopardi”, *El País*, 29 October 2011. <http://goo.gl/L8gZRa>.

“Nowadays, you don’t do costume design, you do fashion design, unless you’re a major opera or classical ballet company [...]. You get items here and there, at Mango, at Zara.”

Lydia Azzopardi⁹

One of the most recent costume collections to be acquired by the MAE is the collection of the contemporary dance company Gelabert-Azzopardi.¹⁰ Its creator, Lydia Azzopardi,¹¹ maintains that the exploration of fabrics was a constant feature of her travels; she mixed them and was unable to discard any of their unique qualities. In her tireless pursuit of comfort in movement, she came upon new flexible fabrics that were being promoted by the European textile industry as replacements for cotton and linen and yet were unknown in Barcelona at the time. These were polyester, elastane and synthetic fibres, which have changed our approach to costumes and which the young dance company adopted in the nineteen-eighties to enhance the fluidity of its productions.

Gelabert-Azzopardi also took an important decision to collaborate with artists of varying kinds, giving the company’s work a unique synergistic value. A fine example is the enriching and fantastical creation of the “traje de luces” in *Belmonte*, a work of marine inspiration from the painter Frederic Amat.

Bodice made by Cesc Gelabert for *La Belmonte*, created with the painter Frederic Amat, Teatre Lliure, 1988. Photograph: Jesús Atienza.



12 Victòria dels Àngels Collection (1923-2005). An internationally renowned soprano, Victòria dels Àngels won a radio contest called “Concursos viventes” in 1940. Her prize was to perform *La Bohème* on stage at the Teatre Victòria in a performance that would launch her on her way to singing opera in the leading theatres of the world. In the nineteen-sixties, she began focusing more on concert performances, particularly lieder recitals. The MAE houses a total of 100 items of costume.

A creation of one's own

Returning to our starting point, the legend surrounding the dancer Tòrtola Valencia lacked nothing in textile design, creation and production. Like many other artists, we know that she drew inspiration from her travels and the places she explored and that she rapidly incorporated these in her costumes and accessories. In the same way, the soprano Victòria dels Àngels,¹² who has left us all of her costumes, particularly those from her concerts, created her garments with her own hands out of a clear-cut, minimalist pattern, making a striking impression because of the quality of the fabrics and the intention of the colours that she herself selected.

From the stage to history

The task of the MAE is to preserve the memory of the performing arts, but performances of plays and dance cannot be kept in conservation boxes. This is why collections like the one on stage costumes are an indispensable part of theatre memory, enabling us to rediscover, restore and relive unique experiences from past lives. ●

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Related links

- Escena Digital – Digital Repository of the MAE Collections
(<http://colleccions.cdmae.cat/>)
- Catalan Museum of Performing Arts
(<http://www.cdmae.cat/>)
- Theatre Institute
(<http://www.institutdelteatre.cat/>)

The *Witches' Cloth*: An exceptional textile in Sant Joan de les Abadesses

by LAIA PÉREZ PENA Graduate in Art History (UAB)

¹ Francesca Español has associated “*quam vocatur aquilarum*” from the 1217 inventory with the *Witches' Cloth*. In our view, this is more likely a reference to the *Teixit de les àguiles*. ESPAÑOL BERTRAN, Francesca, “Sant Joan de les Abadesses durant els segles del Romànic”, in CRISPÍ, Marta; MONTRAVETA, Míriam (ed.), *El monestir de Sant Joan de les Abadesses*, Sant Joan de les Abadesses, 2012, p. 50.

² MASDEU, Josep, “Un inventari de l’any 1217 de Sant Joan de les Abadesses”, *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Vich*, IV (1921-1924), 1923 (Vic), pp. 141-146; MASDEU, Josep, “Un inventari de l’any Sant Joan de les Abadesses”, *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Vich*, 1915-1916-1917, Vic, p. 44.

³ Visita, inventari, rendes i beneficis i manaments promulgats per Sebastià Illa, arxiprest, 1621-1623, f. 2r [Archive of the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses – pastoral visits].

⁴ Visita pastoral i inventari de Francesc Vergés, arxiprest, 1674, f. 17r [Archive of the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses – pastoral visits];

El drap de les Bruixes, or the ‘Witches’ Cloth’ (MEV 557), is a silk cloth measuring 245 x 109 cm originally from the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses and conserved at the Episcopal Museum of Vic since 1888. It was used until recent times as an altar frontal, though its original form and purpose are unknown. While Sant Joan de les Abadesses has a comprehensive archive, there is no mention of the cloth in the earliest inventory, from the year 1217¹. In a later inventory of 1357² we find complete descriptions of each altar and its adornments, which include a series of cloths that were not located in the monastery church. In particular, ‘*rubeam signatam signis diversarum bestiarum*’ may refer to a cope for which part of the Witches’ Cloth was used – perhaps the fragment now missing from the upper band of decoration. The first documentary evidence of the cloth’s existence may be the record of a pastoral visit to the monastery by the archpriest Sebastià Illa, on 14 July 1621. In his description of the altar he notes ‘*Item un palit vermell dit de las bruxas*’³, for which he requested the monastery’s chief administrator to commission two large candles. The next evidence we find is from a later pastoral visit, made by the archpriest Francesc Vergés in 1674. From his report, we learn that the Witches’ Cloth is no longer placed on the altar but instead housed in the sacristy of the monastery church: ‘*Item lo palit de sati mostrejat dit lo palit de las bruxas molt vell y dolent*’⁴.

While the cloth is comparatively well preserved, there are nonetheless clear signs of various alterations over the centuries, and close analysis reveals several areas that have been sewn and repaired,⁵ suggesting that the original piece was cut in order to be re-purposed as a pallium or altar frontal⁶. It was in this

published recently by: CRISPÍ, Marta; MONTRAVETA, Míriam (ed.), *El monestir de Sant Joan de les Abadesses*, Sant Joan de les Abadesses, 2012, pp. 192-194.

⁵ PEREZ PENA, Laia, “El paño de las brujas: nuevas vías de investigación”, *Anales de Historia del Arte*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2013 (in press).

⁶ We recall the words of Father Gudíol (1893), who refers to “a silk cloth used as a frontal”. *Catálogo del Museo Arqueológico Artístico Episcopal de Vich*, Vic, 1893, p. 224.



The Witches' Cloth (MEV 557). ©Museu Episcopal de Vic. [See zoom](#).



Details of the cloth, showing repair work. ©Laia Pérez Pena.



Detail of the selvedge, showing the lining of linen and lustring. © Laia Pérez Pena

7 Specialists from the Abegg-Stiftung and the MEV agree that the frame is clearly Baroque.

8 This formal analysis was conducted as part of research in preparing the dissertation for the master's degree in Analysis and Management of the Artistic Heritage, PEREZ PENA, Laia, *El drap de les Bruixes: qüestions entorn a l'origen, temàtica i funció d'un textit excepcional*, 2012 (in press), supervised by Dr Manuel Castiñeiras.

9 MARTÍN I ROS, Rosa M., "Teixit de les Bruixes", *Catalunya Romànica*, XXII, Barcelona, 1986, p. 273; MARTÍN I ROS, Rosa M., "Teixit de les Bruixes", *Catalunya Romànica*, X, Barcelona, 1987, p. 398.

10 SHEPHERD, Dorothy; VIAL, Gabriel, "La chasuble de Saint-Sernin", *Bulletin de liaison du CIETA*, 21, 1965 (Lyon), pp. 20-31.

11 *Frieze of Griffins*, from the palace of King Darius I at Susa. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Sb 3322.

new form that the cloth was conserved, mounted since the Baroque period – if not earlier – in a simple **wooden frame**. The frame itself, now in storage at the Episcopal Museum of Vic, still shows traces of silk thread from the Witches' Cloth in the nails at the joints⁷. In addition, the selvedge shows signs of strengthening, again from the Baroque period, with the addition of two or three internal layers of linen and lustring to give the fabric greater stiffness⁸.

Iconographic programme

The decoration of the Witches' Cloth is arranged in three horizontal bands. The central band shows an imaginary animal: a winged lion with two bodies, a tail in the form of a snake⁹ and geometric hair in concentric lines that end in a zig-zag pattern, imitating the lion's mane. Two symmetrical wings fan out beneath the figure, in one case with a small gap in the decoration to the right, presumably the result of an error in the initial preparation of the design¹⁰. The animal's feet are decorated with white circles and red lines that recall animal portrayals in Persian art¹¹. The figure is framed twice, first by two smaller wings that project from the shoulders and join just above the lion's mane, and second by the tail, which forms an arch rising from the outermost corner of the lower wings and passing over the figure's head. The tail structure, outlined in yellow, is formed by horizontal blue lines in a zig-zag pattern to imitate the scaled appearance of the snake's body, upon which are placed small animal heads that may be griffins. The decoration of the cloth's central band is completed by two symmetrical bird figures that face one another, set in the spandrels of the outer arch, a composition repeatedly found in various forms



Detail of decoration on the central band. ©Laia Pérez Pena.



Plaque of St Peter from a monastery in the north of Syria (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, n. 50.5.1). ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

12 As is the case of various miniatures of the *Evangeliiari de Lorsch*, a Carolingian ivory plaque depicting the Virgin Mary as a Personification of the Church, from Aachen, and several Byzantine silver plaques from a monastery in the north of Syria.

13 MARTÍN I ROS, Rosa M., “Teixit de les Bruixes”, *Catalunya Romànica*, XXII, Barcelona, 1986, p. 273;

MARTÍN I ROS, Rosa M., “Teixit de les Bruixes”, *Catalunya Romànica*, X, Barcelona, 1987, p. 398.

14 CIMMINO, Franco, *La vida cotidiana de los egipcios*, Madrid, 2002, pp. 157-158.

15 Rosa M. Martín i Ros also suggested that it could be an Egyptian instrument such as the systrium. MARTÍN I ROS, Rosa M., “Teixit de les

of Byzantine art¹². The bird can be identified as a crested ibis¹³, represented by the hieroglyph *Akh*, an immortal element in the Ancient Egyptian belief system that, together with the *Ka* and the *Ba*, made up the three parts of the human soul. Over time, the *Akh* came to signify a roaming spirit, moving between humans and the gods, that is particularly associated with embalming and the mummification ritual¹⁴.

The upper and lower bands of decoration, which are identical, are based around pairs of facing peacocks. From the Persian tradition, the peacock was commonly used in early-Christian and Byzantine art to symbolise the immortality of the soul and is depicted on many sarcophagi and in numerous mosaics from these periods. The peacock's chest is adorned with a pearl necklace, while the belly bears a distinctive pattern formed by petals in the shape of inverted hearts. The tail rises vertically and joins with that of the bird in the adjoining section of the design, forming an oval arch. Within this is a depiction of the *hom*, or tree of life¹⁵, from the Mesopotamian tradition, with

Bruixes”, *Catalunya Romànica*, XXII, Barcelona, 1986, p. 273; MARTÍN I ROS, Rosa M., “Teixit de les Bruixes”, *Catalunya Romànica*, X, Barcelona, 1987, p. 398.

Detail of decoration on the lower band. © Laia Pérez Pena.



16 There are many examples of Sasanian, early-Christian and Byzantine art in which peacocks are juxtaposed with vines, as is the case of the Grape Harvester and Peacock mosaic from the Church of Maaut El Naama (Syria), conserved at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

a central trunk and branches ending in rounded floral depictions. Each pair of peacocks is separated by a simplified vine with fruit to either side, above which are floral motifs before the vine ends in an upward bunch of grapes that sits between the harpy-like talons of the lion figure in the upper band¹⁶. This particular element is both decorative and compositional, serving to harmonise the formal and symbolic characteristics of the two bands in a single iconographic programme.

Production from the Levant

There are many surviving examples of Byzantine textiles manufactured in workshops around the Eastern Mediterranean, across Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Though it can be difficult to distinguish between items produced in each of these regions, written sources describe major centres of production



Tunic fragment. Egypt, eighth or ninth century. ©Christie's.



Ibis cloth (Paris, Musée national du Moyen-Âge-Thermes de Cluny, CL. 21959).

17 T. K. THOMAS, "Coptic and byzantine textiles found in Egypt: corpora, collections and scholarly perspectives", in R. S. BAGNALL, *Egypt in the Byzantine World. 300-700*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 137-163.

18 We refer to the *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Geniza Documents*, and to other contemporary sources cited by historians, particularly in work related to the trade and import of textiles around the Mediterranean Basin in the Late Middle Ages.

19 PEREZ PENA, Laia, "El drap de les Bruixes: al-Àndalus, Sicília o Síria?", *Síntesi. Quaderns dels Seminaris de Besalú*, 2, 2014, pp. 75-92. PEREZ PENA, Laia, "El paño de las brujas: nuevas vías de investigación", *Anales de Historia del Arte*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2013 (in press).

20 MUTHESIUS, Anna, *Byzantine silk weaving. AD 400 to AD 1200*, Vienna, 1997, p. 66.

in Alexandria¹⁷, Tyre, Sidon and Antioch¹⁸. It is among this group of fabrics with strong Byzantine and Sasanian influences – though not conditioned by the styles of metropolitan production – that we should consider the Witches' Cloth, which can be dated to the ninth or tenth century¹⁹. Though by this period Muslim rule had extended across the Eastern Mediterranean, it has been suggested that Christian weavers may have found refuge in Syrian monasteries and also in Egypt, where Coptic Christians continued to weave with the permission of the Muslim authorities²⁰. The only documented examples of Byzantine silk textiles from the eastern Mediterranean are those recovered from monastic burial sites and found in cities such as Antinoe and Akhmim, in Egypt²¹. ●

21 *Ibis cloth* (Paris, Musée national du Moyen Âge-Thermes de Cluny, CL. 21959), found at Antinoe, samite, fifth or sixth century; *Textile fragment* (London, British Museum, n-1904,7-6,41), eighth century, probably found at Akhmim, and *Silk textile fragment* (Londres, V&A Museum, T.56-1936).

Puig i Cadafalch and filigree architecture. The influence of a lace-making lineage

by NEUS RIBAS SAN EMETERIO, director of the Arenys de Mar Museum
and JOAN MIQUEL LLODRÀ NOGUERAS, art historian

¹ GIMÉNEZ BLASCO, J., *Mataró en la Catalunya del segle XVII. Un microcosmos en moviment* (Premi Iluro, 2001).

² LABORDE, A., *Itinerario descriptivo de las provincias de España*, Valencia, 1816, p. 11.

³ Arxiu Comarcal del Maresme (ACM). Contribució de Comerç i Indústria.

Lace-making is currently thought of as a leisure activity or popular handicraft, yet bobbin lace was for centuries an important economic driver in certain areas of Catalonia, particularly on the coast of Barcelona, or the *Costa de Llevant*. Although the first references to lace-making or haberdashery businesses date back to the seventeenth century, sources situate the boom in this activity around the eighteenth century. In his study, Joan Giménez Blasco talks about Mataró, the current capital of the Maresme province, which had an emerging network of lace manufacture. The lace was produced by women living in poor conditions, overseen by a small group of traders who were also responsible for selling the lace on the Catalan and Spanish markets.¹ Evidence of this intense textile manufacturing activity – not just of lace, but also of calicos, lace stockings and cotton fabrics – can be found in the accounts of travellers who passed through this coastal town. At the start of the nineteenth century, Alexandre Laborde, to cite one traveller, mentioned seven businesses dedicated to bobbin lace and seventeen to blonde lace; that is, lace made from silk.² Unlike other nearby towns, such as Arenys de Mar, the volume of lace-making activity in Mataró began to fall in the mid-eighteen hundreds, as clearly revealed in the records of industries conserved in the *Arxiu Comarcal del Maresme* (Maresme Provincial Archive). The fourteen manufacturers of blonde lace documented in 1836 fell to seven in 1854, and to just three in 1862.³ This was due not only to the introduction of mechanical production of lace, but also to the increasing prominence of other textile industries in the same place.

A lace-making lineage

A good example of the rise of lace-making in Mataró – and indeed of its subsequent fall – is that of the Puig family. The multi-faceted Josep M. Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956), the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of whose birth is celebrated this year, was born into this lineage of blonde lace-makers.

The first Puig recorded as working in the lace business was Josep Puig i Ros, a veil-maker by trade. He lived in Carreró, in the same building where, years later, the prestigious architect, art historian and politician – Puig's great-great-



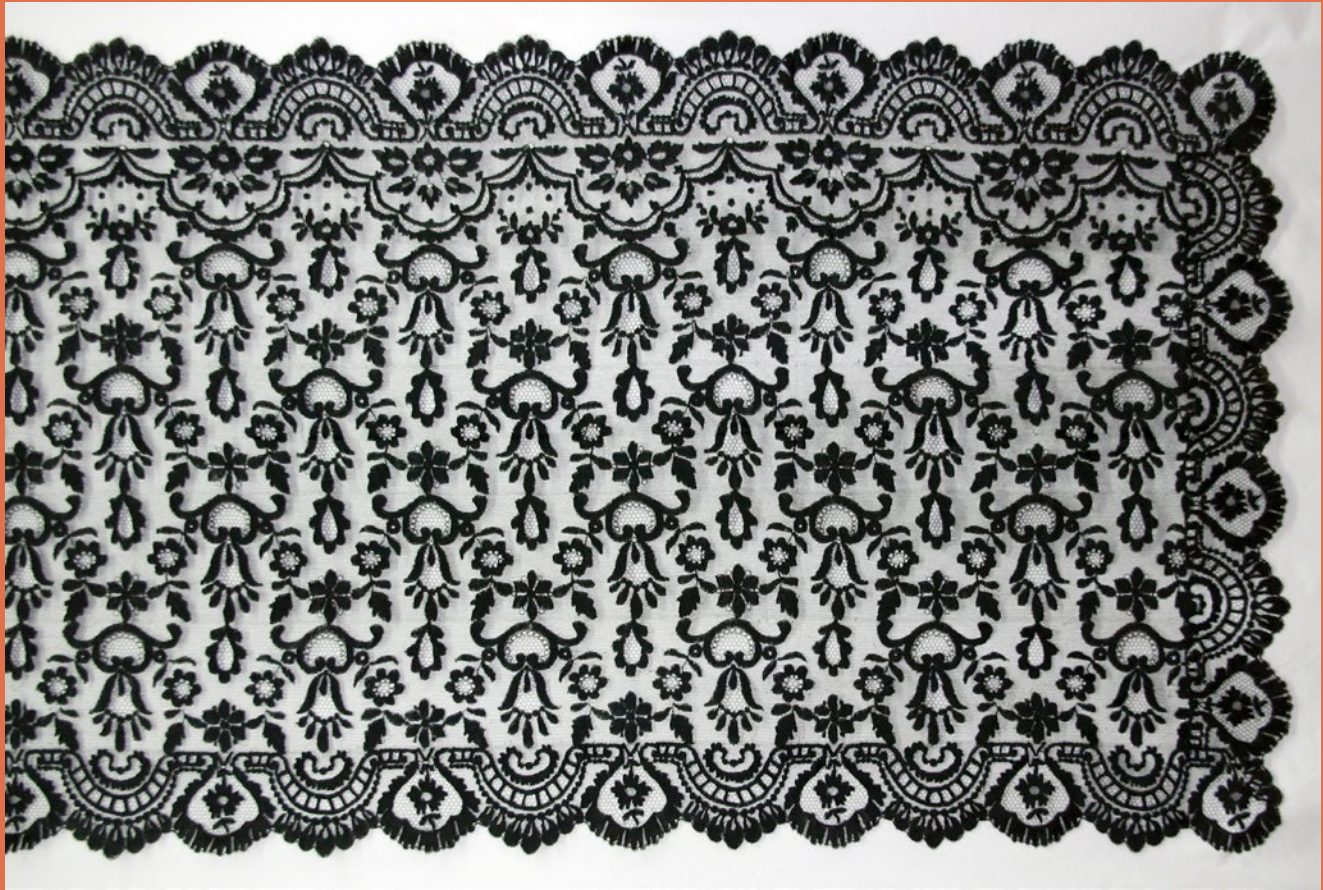
Puig i Cadafalch's daughter making bobbin lace at the family's summer residence in Argentona. 1904. Photograph: Adolf Mas. Amatller Institute of Hispanic Art, Mas Archive.



⁴ *Almanak Mercantil o Guia de Comerciantes para el año 1799 por D.D.M.G. Madrid.*

grandson – would be born. Josep Puig i Ros’s son, Pedro Puig, continued with the family business, and appears in a list of manufacturers of blonde lace in the *Almanaks Mercantils* or *Guia de Comerciantes* for the years 1800, 1802 and 1803. In reference to Pedro Puig and the other names that appear, the almanac states: “The aforementioned manufacturers of lace and blonde lace sell wholesale and export to America themselves”.⁴

In documents consulted on profits for 1811, Pedro Puig is described as a silk weaver, a job that is directly related to the production of the highest quality lace, or blonde lace. In 1815, 1816 and 1817, he is registered as a veil-maker. Josep Puig i Feliu, the next generation and the grandfather of our architect, worked as a veil-maker and trader from 1823. In the 1842 records, he is registered as a silk weaver, information that again points to the trade of luxury lace: blonde lacework for veils, mantillas and flounces for dresses, among other items. Finally, in 1848, he is registered as a producer of blonde lace. On his death, the business, still in the same building in Carreró, was taken up by his wife, Mercè Bruguera, under the trade name of the “Widow of Puig”. This family industry was inherited by Joan Puig i Bruguera, who married Teresa Cadafalch – the parents of our honoured architect – and kept the business going until his death in 1894.



Fragment of mantilla in blonde lace, from the collection of Francesca Bonnemaïson. Nineteenth century. Rec. no. 11162, Arenys de Mar Museum.

Puig i Cadafalch, heir of lace-makers

5 PUIG I CADAFALCH, J., *Memòries*, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona, 2003. p. 17.

Puig i Cadafalch always remembered his family business, the years lived between laces, patterns, cushions and bobbins. In his unfinished memoirs, begun in 1944, he talks about his ancestors from Púbol (Baix Empordà), who worked in the lace business probably from the end of the eighteenth century. He describes his childhood at home: “I have a memory of family life, the hustle and bustle of the lace industry, buying silk in Murcia and Andalusia; winding it on to cane tubes and then onto bobbins; the preparation of drawings, the pricking of patterns and dividing the work among hundreds of peasant farmers in Mataró, Argentona, Cabrils, Òrrius, Dosrius, Llanvaneres, Sant Cebrià de Vallalta, etc.”⁵

A lover of tradition, of handicrafts and art industries – the material expression of the Catalan national spirit, as he saw them – Puig lamented the decline of lace-making, which was killed off by mechanisation. In the summer of 1894, the year in which the family business closed, Puig stated in the local press that he was saddened by the gradual disappearance of various handicraft industries from Mataró. In addition to the trades of glassmaker, potter and veil maker, the young architect lamented the loss of lace-making, which he described as: “the most Catalan home-based art that there is”. It died, in his words, like a late shoot in the middle of a freeze. Puig nostalgically recalled a

Spinner with yarn and spindle,
by Eusebi Arnau, over the
entrance to the Casa Coll
i Regas, Mataró. Photograph:
©Ramon Soler Pascuet.
[See more.](#)



⁶ Idem, “L’absolta d’una
industria mataronesa”,
Noticiero Mataronés, 26
August 1894.

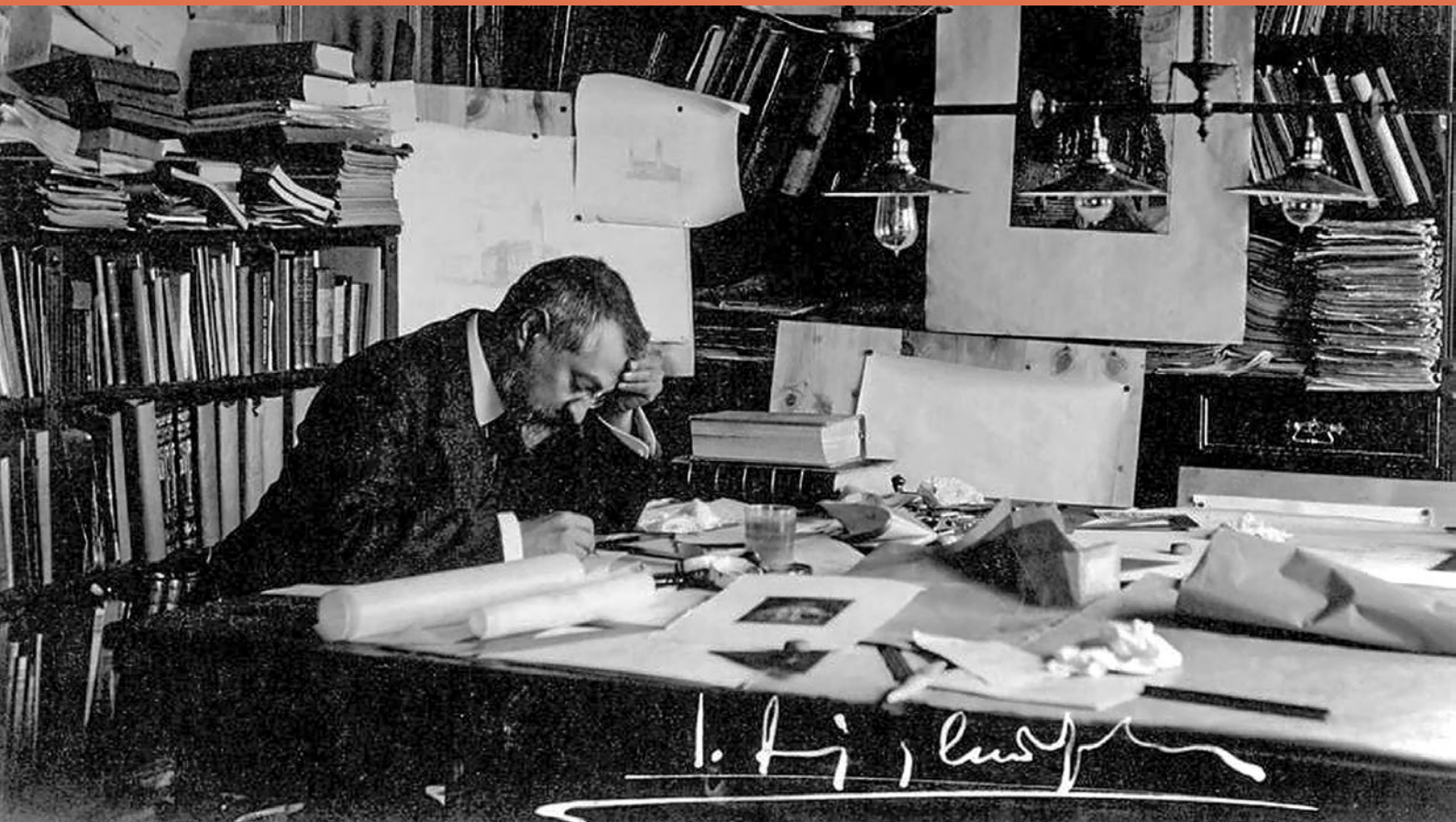
⁷ ACM. Fons de la notaria de
Mataró. Notari Juan B. Calvo,
folios 220 to 227.

⁸ A collection that cannot
now be located. We are
grateful to Sílvia Ventosa,
of the Barcelona Design
Museum, for research
collaboration.

lost era, the years in the Carreró building, “with its patriarchal organisation, its systems of working at home, [...] with no strikes, no anarchists, no monopolies, or large amounts of capital [...]”.⁶ In the broadest sense, as he himself stated, the loss was to the detriment of both art and civilisation.

Apart from the data provided in administrative documents, no other sources have yet been discovered that provide more details of the business at *Can Puig*. No records of tools, lace samples, or any other object associated with the trade of lace-maker appear in either the testament of Puig Bruguera, dated 22 February 1878⁷, or the 1894 record book of the notary Joaquin Cabanes, which details the property inherited by Puig i Cadafalch. This is probably because these objects were not considered remarkable.

Fortunately, in 1930, the architect, who always supported the conservation and safeguarding of historical and artistic heritage, donated to the *Biblioteca dels Museus de Barcelona* (Library of the Museums of Barcelona) a notable collection of patterns, templates and drawings for lace that had belonged to his family.⁸ Thanks to an article on this generous donation written by Adelaida Ferré, an expert on lace-making and folklore studies, we know more about the products that were manufactured and sold by members of the family.



Portrait of Josep Puig i Cadafalch. 1913-1918. Francesc Serra. Photographic Archive of Barcelona.

9 FERRER, A., “Col·lecció de patrons de puntes al coixí ingressada a la Biblioteca dels Museus d’Art”. *Butlletí dels Museus d’Art de Barcelona*, November 1931, no. 6, pp. 169-176.

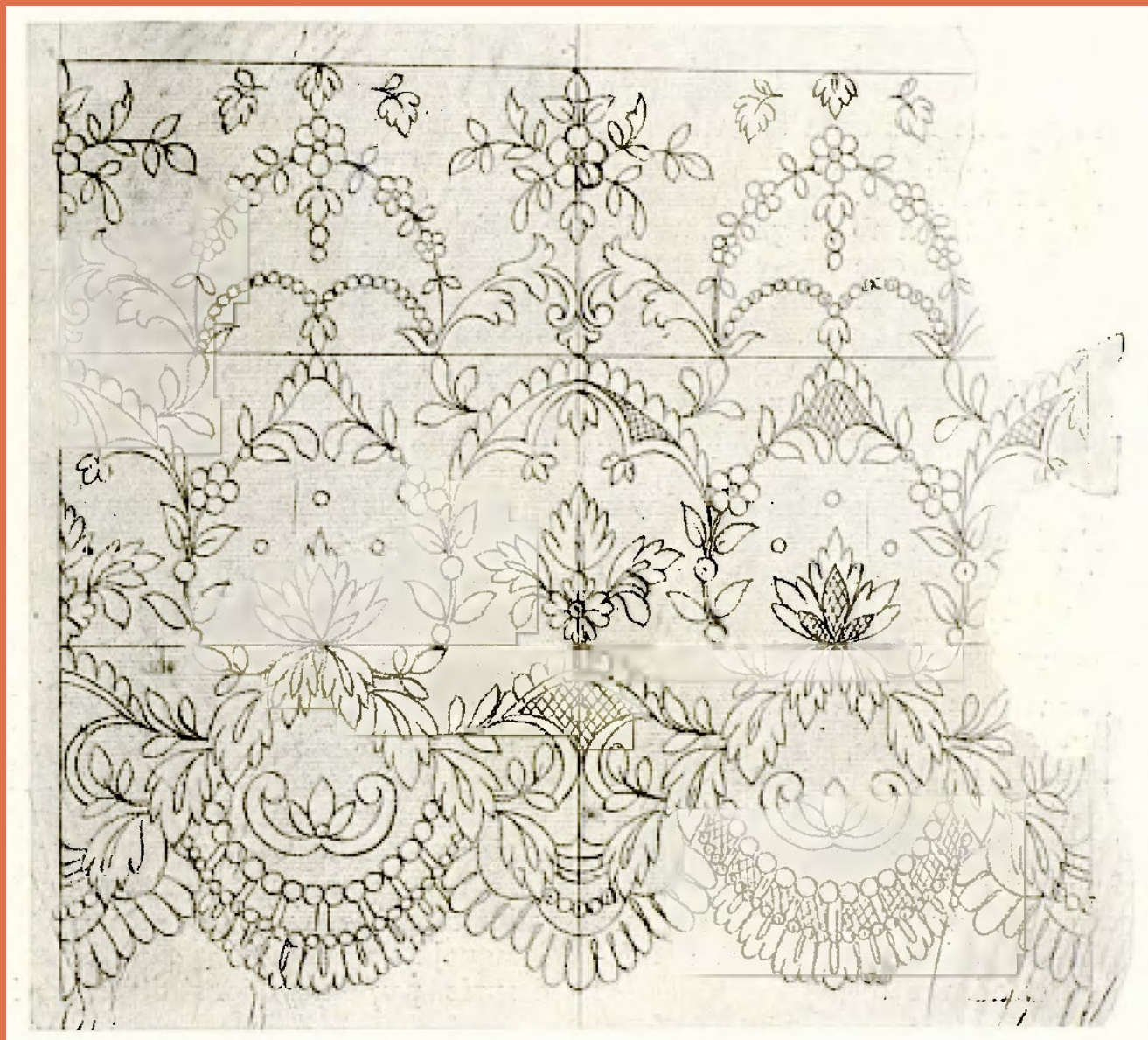
10 Some works discuss the *sgraffito* of the *Casa Amatller* in reference to examples of lace found in the Episcopal Museum of Vic.

Beyond the information on the Puig house, the complete, detailed study by Ferré is a valuable source of technical, artistic and commercial information for weaving together and filling out the history of lace in Catalonia.⁹ The donation is further proof of Puig i Cadafalch’s long-standing interest in the world of textiles in all its many manifestations, encompassing not only lace but also fabrics in general, a legacy he knew must be protected, defended and disseminated.

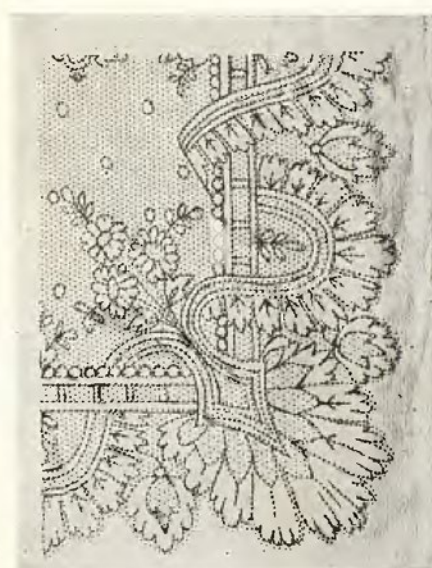
The filigree architect

At the decorative level, expressed in a multiplicity of applied arts drawn from the fine crafts so highly prized during the years of Catalan *modernisme*, Puig i Cadafalch’s work teemed with floral and plant decorations, which also permeated lace and fabric design at the time. However, models adapted from late-Gothic or Renaissance cut velvet – particularly well-known motifs of the pomegranate, pineapple or thistle, seen in the famous *griccia* velvet – are used extensively in *Casa Amatller*, perhaps more than patterns that might have been taken from lace and blonde lace.¹⁰

Although the *sgraffito* that covers some of his constructions, notably those designed during his “white period”, has often been compared with very fine



Plans presented by Puig i Cadafalch to the Board of Museums, taken from an article by Adelaida Ferrer de Ruíz-Narváez: *Col·lecció de patrons de puntes al coixí ingressada a la Biblioteca dels Museus d'Art*, Bulletin of the Art Museums of Barcelona, Volume I, November 1931, No. 6.



Detail of a corbel on the Casa Martí, depicting a lace-maker, 1896 (Els Quatre Gats), Barcelona. ©Ramon Soler Pascuet.



11 JARDÍ, E., *Puig i Cadafalch, arquitecte, polític i historiador de l'art* (Premi Iluro 1974), Mataró, 1975, p. 9.
 12 “[...] from this rare employment of all the many material advances and the elegance with which they are constantly dressed in traditional attire emerges the personal seal that defines his work, distinguishing it from all others [...]”. See “Artista constructor”, *Hispania*, vol. IV, 28 February 1902, pp. 93 and 94.

lace, the influence of lace-makers on Puig i Cadafalch should be considered from a more conceptual perspective of composition, rather than as a formal influence. The literature on his architecture describes the decorative elements – in stone, iron, glass, ceramic and stucco – in terms that could easily be applied to the work of lace-makers, including “delicateness”, “attention to detail”, “baroque style”, “exuberance” and “luxuriance”. The decorative work undertaken on most of these buildings, particularly private dwellings, can be defined in terms of its execution, perfection and complexity as true filigree; a word that is used to describe one of the most characteristic types of *ret fi* or Arenys lace. In fact, as stated by Enric Jardí, some biographers believe that the work of Puig i Cadafalch’s father as a producer of tulles and laces accounts for our architect’s preoccupation with precision.¹¹

Like the meticulousness and skill with which bobbins were moved around their cushions, braiding together the threads that would create fine pieces of lace or blonde lace, in Puig i Cadafalch’s building a large and diverse team of craftspeople worked in coordination and juxtaposition to weave together a series of cohesive decorative elements. On more than one occasion, these elements have been compared to clothing on the “body”, on the underlying architectural structure.¹² To continue with the textile parallel, like lace-makers working from pre-established patterns, the craftspeople interpreted perfectly the sketches that the architect – known for his love of spontaneous drawings – passed on to them.

On the origins

We must look beyond subjective metaphorical comparisons to find the true influence of lace and lace-makers on Puig i Cadafalch’s work. In 1973, the architect Lluís Bonet i Garí, who had worked with our architect and with Gaudí, stated in a conversation that while Gaudí felt at home with the forgers from



The lace-maker Marià Castells Simon drawing in his workshop. First quarter of the twentieth century. Photograph: Joaquim Castells i Simon. Fidel Fita Historical Archive, Arenys de Mar.

Camp de Tarragona, Puig i Cadafalch was comfortable with the embroiderers of the Maresme, which we can interpret as including lace-makers or needle workers. Bonet offered this as a graphical explanation of Gaudí's preponderance for spacious volumes and Puig i Cadafalch's love of decorative filigree.¹³

In fact, much has been written about the potential impact that boiler-making (his father's trade) had on Gaudí's work. It seems that Gaudí himself acknowledged that his conception of space, his interest in decorative elements, his manual skills, and his capacity to endow flat surfaces with volume were the result of hours spent working and learning in his father's workshop. Might we draw a similar conclusion about Puig i Cadafalch? What had stimulated his creative thought through before he began his studies in Barcelona? The "preparation of drawings" that he himself spoke of in his memoirs, hides from the public the meticulous and delicate task of drawing, which in the creation of quality lace left no margin for even the slightest error.

In the collection of the Castells family of lace-makers, kept at the Museum of Arenys de Mar and which includes preparatory drawings and final designs by Marià Castells Simon (1876-1931), we can see in greater detail how a lace design was created. The ruler, the set square, the compass or the drafting triangle, among others, are essential tools on the lace designer's

¹³ ROHRER, J., "Puig i Cadafalch: els primers treballs", a VV.AA., *Josep Puig i Cadafalch: la arquitectura entre la casa y la ciudad = Architecture between the*

house and the city [exhibition catalogue, Centre Cultural de la Fundació Caixa de Pensions, 4 December 1989-11 February 1990], 1st ed., Barcelona, 1989, p. 29.

table, alongside the eraser and pencil. The secret of this trade is not just to be able to draw by hand, it is also vital to ensure that the various parts of the design into which a piece of lace or blonde lace is divided – the patterns that the lace-makers will work on – match up. In addition, it is essential that the drawing is harmonious with the ground, whether tulle or torchon, on which it will unfold. It is normally created using templates with a precise grid. As in so many other arts and crafts, behind the production of lace is a geometric foundation of varying complexity that is vital to its successful completion. The same precision is required to prick out the template and patterns, a task that is completely mechanical and repetitive, the perfection of which will determine the quality of the final piece.

Therefore, it is far from fanciful to imagine a young Puig i Cadafalch in the family workshop, pricking out patterns or laying down his first drawings, his first decorative compositions, his first floral, plant-based or geometric universes that he would then apply to his architecture, using the same tools that he would re-purpose to another art form some years later. We cannot know for certain whether his talent as a designer, his capacity to develop complex ornamental repertoires, was first expressed in the design of a mantilla, a flounce on an Alb, or even simple lace inserts. Yet in a family-based industry like lace production, in which all members were likely to have taken a role, it is hard to imagine that the young and energetic Puig i Cadafalch would not have been involved in these tasks. ●

The Sephardi *Berberisca* Dress, Tradition and Symbology

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de Madrid

¹ This is an Arab tradition that was adopted by the Jews. Arabs and Berbers attribute a power of healing and protection to the henna plant and its leaves are used for aesthetic and healing purposes. On the henna night, women paint their hands following an Arab practice that is supposed to bring luck. GOLDENBERG, André. *Les Juifs du Maroc: images et textes*. Paris, 1992, p. 114.

When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 by the Catholic Monarchs, many of them crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and put themselves under the protection of the Sultan of Morocco, who at the time held court in Fez. This meant that the Jewish people already living in North Africa, who were either Arabic or Berber in their language and culture, were now joined by Sephardi Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who held onto Spanish as their language of daily life and kept many of the customs and traditions developed over centuries back in their beloved Sepharad. The clothing of the Sephardim, too, had its own character, which was based on their pre-expulsion Spanish roots and now changed slowly under the influence of their new Arab surroundings.

The Sephardi *berberisca* dress, which is also known as *el-keswa el-kbira* in Arabic and *grande robe* in French (both meaning “great dress” in English), forms part of the traditional costume of Sephardi brides in northern Morocco. It is not a wedding dress, but rather is worn by the bride on the celebration known as the *noche de paños*, or henna night¹. Particular to northern Morocco’s Jews (e.g., in Tangier, Larache, Ksar el-Kebir and Tétouan), the henna night takes place before the wedding and brings together the families and friends of the bride and groom to sing the praises of the bride.

The presence of relatively similar ceremonial costumes in a number of the countries where the Jews expelled in the fifteenth century went to settle is a coincidence that inevitably leads back to Spain. As written texts and first-hand accounts suggest, the use of the ceremonial *berberisca* dress, which had similar equivalents in the Jewish communities of Turkey, Greece, Algeria and Bulgaria, extended far beyond the wedding ceremony itself. Jewish women also wore it on the day of circumcision and in the main festivities of the Jewish calendar.

In the nineteenth century, the wedding celebrations of Morocco’s Jews began between ten and fifteen days before the ceremony itself. It appears that the bride’s henna night, or *berberisca* night, has no equivalent outside of Morocco. Among Morocco’s Jews, the Saturday before the wedding is known as *saftarraï*, while the Sephardi communities in Turkey and Greece call it the shabat of hand-kissing and the shabat of second birth, respectively.

Moroccan Jewish woman.
Oskar Lenz, 1892.



The dress itself has its roots in fifteenth-century Spain. Garments of this sort, which were first produced by the Jewish embroiderers of the Spanish royal court in the Middle Ages, were characterised by being made of rich dark velvet, with embroidery of a particular thickness and sleeves that were separate from the rest of the dress, reminiscent of late medieval Spanish ceremonial robes. The dress has been compared to various traditional costumes of the Iberian Peninsula. Some authors have commented on its similarity with the traditional clothing worn by the women of Spain's Salamanca province. Similarities can be observed, for example, in the *traje de charra* or *traje de vistas* of the village of La Alberca, and the skirt recalls the *manteo* worn in most of the southern areas of Spain's northern sub-plateau. The embroidered geometrical motifs still persist in our tradition, where they may be recalled in the white linen chemises worn by Spanish brides and embroidered with silk thread. Even the velvet fabric is evidence of a richness indebted to the Spanish garments worn by nobility at the dawn of the Renaissance. Thus, as Sarah Leibovici suggests in her study on Sephardi weddings entitled *Nuestras bodas sefarditas*, a provisional inference can be drawn that the velvet-and-gold dress owes a great deal to some of the Spanish provinces from which the Sephardim came.

Jewish woman in Tangier
(Morocco), 1900.



This party dress was worn by married women until the mid-twentieth century. It came to be known as the dress that the bride would receive from her father on the occasion of her wedding, where she would first wear it in the henna ceremony as part of the legacy of Morocco's Jews.

Over time, the *berberisca* dress or *keswa el kbira* has evolved in terms of its decoration and the introduction of new techniques. The use of braided gold thread in the embroidery and the application of gold cord, both of which appeared often, created surprising effects. There are also examples of *keswa el kbira* in which pieces of precious fabrics like silk were used to adorn, for example, the bottom part of the skirt. With the increase in decoration, particularly the use of gold thread, the *keswa el kbira* became very costly and only wealthy families could afford it. As a result, young women from the lower classes were forced to borrow parts of the garment or even the entire dress for their wedding. The *keswa el kbira* became increasingly rare and production plummeted in the nineteen-fifties. Then, with the massive migration of the Jewish population in the nineteen-sixties, production ceased altogether.

The ceremony of the *berberisca* night is a rite of passage: the bride is initiated into the secrets of her new life and her new role as a bearer of tradition. Both the *berberisca* night and her dress fulfil this function: to help the bride transition into her new role as a married woman. As Alvar states: "All these Jewish



2 Alvar, Manuel. *Cantos de boda Judeo-Españoles*, Madrid, CSIC, 1971, p. 28.

3 ORTEGA, Manuel L. *Los hebreos en Marruecos: estudio histórico, político y social*. Ed. hispano-africana, Madrid, 1919, p. 178; JANSEN, Angela. "Keswa Kebira: The Jewish Moroccan Grand Costume" *Khil'a 1, Journal of Dress and Textiles in the Islamic World*. Leiden, 2005, p. 84.

ceremonies, so replete with complexity, are quite simply the formal steps by which the betrothed separates herself from one social structure (her family, her unmarried state) and joins another one (her husband's family, her married state)².

Jewish women in Morocco used to marry very young. From their earliest days, their families arranged their weddings according to material interests. The rule was to marry extremely young women not to males of their own age, but to middle-aged men or even to elderly men, while their spouses were only seven to ten years of age. In some wealthy families, the tradition was to organise a type of miniature wedding at five years of age, with children dressed as bride and groom. This not only brought good luck and good fortune to the children, but it also anticipated the day on which they would marry. For the occasion, the girl would wear a small *keswa el kbira*. A real marriage had two parts, the betrothal and the wedding, which could be spread out over time. The betrothal ceremony generally took place in the house of the girl's family and gave an opportunity for the future groom to offer pieces of jewellery and sweets to his future spouse. Sometimes, a contract of betrothal was signed, stipulating a certain sum of money that would have to be returned along with the jewellery and other gifts if the betrothal was broken³.

The *keswa el kbira* is part of the legacy of Morocco's Jews. The dress originated in Andalusia, where today there still exist such festival garments, like the ones

4 Tétouan was the capital of the Spanish protectorate between 1913 and 1956. It was the northern Moroccan city with the largest settlement of Sephardic Jews who kept their deep-seated Spanish customs and carried on speaking a variety of Spanish known as Judaeo-Spanish, commonly referred to as Ladino and called *Haketia* in Morocco.

worn in the mountains of Huelva by the brotherhoods of Andevalo and Puebla de Guzmán on their religious pilgrimages known as *romerías*, when participants don a jacket, sleeves and skirt that bear a striking resemblance to the *keswa el kbira*, similarly made of velvet and trimmed in braided gold galoons.

The dress is composed of a series of pieces that infuse the ensemble with an incomparable functionality. Given the intrinsic significance of traditional costume, the symbolic function occupies an important place; each piece is a sign that fulfils a specific function for the wearer. Three functions can be seen to coexist or overlap in the same item: the utilitarian, aesthetic and symbolic. The *berberisca* dress is a highly complex piece of clothing, a “cosmic” dress of sorts, which refers to abstract, spiritual and metaphysical ideas and functions as a highly encoded message. It carries the bride into her new life as a married woman, connecting her to tradition.

The names of the different items that make up the *berberisca* dress, or *keswa el kbira*, recall the garment’s Spanish origins and the materials from which they are made resemble those of the Torah scrolls. The colours range from maroon and dark green to dark blue and black. Specifically, the green and blue indicate cities in the interior; the red and maroon point to cities on the coast and in the south; and the purple and black are particular to the city of Tétouan. Over the course of time, regional differences developed. For example, the *keswa el kbira* of Tiznit in southern Morocco shows many more Berber influences than its counterpart in Tétouan in the north, which was considered the most authentic version⁴.

The main ensemble of the garment has **eight pieces**: 1) a skirt; 2) a bodice or breastpiece; 3) a short jacket; 4) a pair of long, wide sleeves; 5) a silk belt; 6) a silk scarf; 7) shoes decorated like the dress, and 8) a headband, because the hair cannot be shown after marriage.

Below is an analysis of the different pieces used in the cities of northern Morocco, with the Arabic names appearing first and the Ladino names included in brackets.

Zeltita (giraldeta)

A large wrap-around skirt, which is called a *zeltita* or *giraldeta*, is worn around the waist in the same fashion as the Torah scrolls, transforming the bride metaphorically into the bearer of the Law. The skirt, which is held to the body by one or more sashes or belts, is made of various bell-shaped pieces with the closed end slanting from left to right, cutting an angle across the front, which is richly decorated with concentric curves that grow in size from the hemline upwards, making a triangular shape that metaphorically represents fertility.

El-keswa el-kbira (Grande Robe).
Left: Rabat, 19th cent., The
Jewish Museum in New York.
Right: Tétouan, 19th cent., Musée
d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme in
Paris. [See more.](#)





Zeltita or giraldeta. British Museum in London.

⁵ Gematria is a method and a metathesis (alternating the letters of a word dependent on the fact that each Hebrew character has a numerical value).

⁶ JOUIN, J. "Le costume de la femme israélite, au Maroc", *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*. Vol. 6, no. 2, 1936, pp. 167-180.

Broadly speaking, the dress is typically adorned with 22 strands of braided galloons as a reminder of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and a metaphor for the Torah, which was written with 22 letters. Another typical number in which the braided galloons can appear is 26, which is highly significant in Judaism. According to gematria⁵, 26 is the numerical value of the name of God. The two lateral pieces above the hips are decorated with star motifs. According to Jouin, the stars are a stylised representation of the protective hand of the *hamsa*, a symbol of monotheistic faith highly prized by Jews and Muslims alike as a reminder of God and an expression of their desire to receive his blessings and protection⁶.

With few exceptions, the braided galloon that finishes the grapes corresponds symbolically to the grapevine, which is above all the property of life and consequently its promise and its value, one of the most precious possessions of man. In nearly all the religions in the vicinity of ancient Israel, the grapevine is a holy and divine tree and its product, wine, is the drink of the gods. Israel, for its part, sees the grapevine as one of the messianic trees. This can be read in the Book of Zechariah: "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree" (Zech 3:10). In their character as fruit, bunches of grapes symbolise fertility, which can be seen in Psalms: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table" (Ps 128:3).



Ktof (punta or peto). National Museum of Anthropology in Madrid.

***Ktof* (punta or peto)**

Beneath the jacket is a bodice or breastpiece, called a *ktof*, which is the same colour and fabric as the skirt and jacket. In most cases, it is only a front piece held to the body by ribbons and this is easily concealed because the jacket covers the rest. Unlike its simple cut, however, it is richly embroidered with gold thread in most cases. The motifs were always different, with floral and geometric designs being foremost. There were also breastpieces decorated with the motif of a two-headed eagle, a characteristically Jewish motif that was also used in jewellery. The two-headed eagle was associated with supreme power by the ancient peoples of Asia Minor. The doubled heads do not express duality or multiplicity. Rather, they reinforce the symbolism of the eagle as a symbol of height and the ascension of the spirit.

In other cases, the breastpiece features birds facing one another. Like all winged creatures, birds are symbols of spirituality, because their ability to fly represents the relationship between heaven and earth.

Generally, birds symbolise spiritual states and a figure of the soul escaping the body, thus interpreting the flight of the soul toward heaven. In both eastern and western traditions, birds are arranged hierarchically on the branches of the Tree of Life.

Detail of ktef (punta or peto).
Birds facing one another.
Sephardic Museum in Toledo.



The first *Etz Jaim*, or Tree of Life, appears in the Garden of Eden and it is a metaphor for the Torah. In Jewish tradition, it is said that the *Etz Jaim* is a symbol both for God and for the Torah, or Law. The Midrash, which contains early interpretations and commentaries on Hebrew biblical texts, indicates that God's first involvement in the creation of the earth was to plant trees. At times, the Tree of Life is used as a name for places of Jewish worship, because it is extremely important in Jewish thought.

In the Kabbalah, the *Etz Jaim* is a mystical symbol used to understand the nature of God and the way in which He created the world. Represented in the form of ten interconnected attributes or emanations, it appears as a central symbol in the Kabbalah.

The Tree of Life is also associated with wisdom: "[Wisdom] is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed" (Prov 3:18).

The **palm tree** is another frequently represented symbolic motif because of its special link to the Jewish people. On their exodus from Egypt, the Israelites made their second camp at Elim, a spot where there were 70 palm trees and twelve springs (Ex 15:27; Num 33:9), and later they received an instruction to take leaves from this tree to raise booths for the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:40; Neh 8:15).

Because they were so familiar to the Israelites, it was natural that the figures of palm trees should be used in the design of the temple of Solomon (1 Kings

Detail of *ktef* (punta or peto).
Stylised flowers. Sephardic
Museum in Toledo.



6:29, 32, 35) and appear in the temple in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 40; 41). Jericho was called "the city of palm trees" (Deut 34:3; Judg 1:16; 3:13; 2 Cor 28:15). The palm is a classical emblem of fertility and victory. This can be seen in Psalms: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Ps 92:12).

Stylised flowers appear repeatedly and in a wide range of varieties, including lilies, irises, tulips and particularly roses. Flowers and how they grow and develop out of earth and water symbolise the nascent manifestation of life as a passive principle, the calyx being like the cup and receptacle of celestial activity and in this respect an especially feminine symbol. The rose is one of the most commonly depicted flowers and it appears in varying shapes and configurations.

The rose is essentially a symbol of finality and the absolute achievement of perfection. It symbolises the cup of life, the soul, the heart and love. It is viewed as a mystical centre. In this respect, a fitting allusion appears in Song of Solomon: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys". And this gives rise to a metaphor for the people of Israel as "a lily among thorns" (Song 2:1, 2).

Fragments of *ktef* (punta or peto).
Rosettes of different types.
Sephardic Museum in Toledo.



The most characteristic rose in the textile arts is the rosette. Chief among types of rosette are the Gothic rose, Renaissance rose and Assyrian rosette, with each presenting the schema of its corresponding style. All of these flowers, which are shown facing outward with a distinct number of petals, appear as opened roses composed of a central button or knob and leaves clustered around it in a circle. Their typology varies widely and some take the shape of a cross. The Assyrian rose has rounded petals that come together at a rounded point. The rosettes on a *ktef* are often accompanied by other geometrical and floral elements and by sigmoid shapes in varied combinations and rhythms with volutes that are attached to a central curved stem. This motif is highly characteristic of Renaissance ornamentation in the stylistic environment from which the *berberisca* dress first came.

Gombaiz (kasot)

Above the skirt is a short jacket, the *gombaiz* (*kasot* in Ladino), in matching colour and material. It has short sleeves, a round neck and is open-fronted, with small silver filigree buttons adorning the edges. A range of techniques and motifs may be used in the decoration of a *gombaiz*.

A common motif on the jacket of the *keswa el kbira* from Tétouan is the spiral on either side of the chest. The spiral is a schematic form representing the evolution of the universe and bears relation to other symbols such as the moon, the labyrinth, the vulva and the shell, all of which converge of the themes of fertility, feminine energy and the natural cycles. In its two directions, the double spiral symbolises both birth and death.



Gombaiz (kasot) 19th cent. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The front of the *keswa el kbira* from Tétouan typically features two symmetrical pairs of large spirals, decorating each side of the gombaiz, which alternate braided gold thread and gold cord. The spiral, or solar wheel, symbolises the cycle of life (eternity). This motif can also be found on Moroccan funeral dress and on tombs in Jewish cemeteries across Morocco, again symbolising the unity of life and death.

Four types of decoration are used for the *gombaiz*:

- 1) *Bersman*. This is a type of braiding applied directly to the cloth. It is often used for edging, as it is strong and can easily be moulded to the contours and seams of the garment. The gold thread is braided around red silk.
- 2) *Sfifa*. Unlike *bersman*, this type of braiding is produced separately and was made by the women of the household under the supervision of the tailor, who provided the gold thread. There are different ways of creating *sfifa*, which may require up to nine threads to be used. Today, both hand-crafted and machine-made *sfifa* can be found in Morocco. It can be used to create different types of decoration; in this case it was used for the spirals on the *gombaiz*, applied around a cardboard core to maintain the shape of the design.
- 3) *Gold galoon*. Gold galoon came mainly from the French influence and was a popular decorative motif that could be used to cover large areas of fabric. In this case, two types of gold galoon were used, one narrow and one wide, matching those of the skirt. The jacket is particularly notable for the elaborate decoration on the back of the sleeves, which combines braiding and cord.

Gombaiz (kasot) 19th cent. Spiral motifs and filigree buttons. Sephardic Museum in Toledo.



7 The first book of the Kabbalah, the *Sefer Yetzirah*, makes reference to the Seven Double Letters of the Hebrew alphabet, from which came the Seven Heavens, the Seven Earths and the Seven Sabbaths.

8 JOUIN, J. "Le costume de la femme israélite, au Maroc" *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*. Vol. 6. No. 2. 1936. p. 169.

4) *Passementerie*. This is the general term for decorative edgings or trimmings in which cord, braid, lace, tassels and other elements are applied directly to a fabric. It was a very popular form of decoration in Morocco and was traditionally used for Jewish clothing. In this case silver cord was applied around the spiral motifs and braided gold thread was used to create the zig-zag pattern on the front of the garment. Of particular significance are the seven silver filigree buttons on either side of the *gombaiz*. They represent the Seven Blessings, recited as part of the week-long festivities following the wedding. Seven is a meaningful number in Judaism; the Sabbath, for example, is observed on the seventh day of the week⁷.

Underneath the short jacket were traditionally worn a pair of long, broad sleeves, or *kmam*. These would originally have been part of a long, fine shirt, the *tchamir*, worn under the *keswa el kbira*, but were later produced as a separate garment and worn over the jacket. Most were made of muslin and decorated with gold lace. Women would wear them passed over their backs, draping elegantly from their shoulders to give the appearance of a shawl.

Hzem (kusaka)

The silk belt is known as the *hzem*. These items were usually woven in Fez, in the same workshops that produced the belts worn by Muslim women. Most examples were woven in gold thread and decorated with fringing at each end. They were traditionally long enough to be wrapped around the waist three or four times, with the fringing left to hang at the front⁸.



Belt with geometric decoration.
Sephardic Museum in Toledo.



Shawl (fechtul). 19th-20th cent.
Sephardic Museum in Toledo.

Fechtul (panwelo)

9 FRAILE GIL, José Manuel
“La indumentaria sefardí en
el Norte de Marruecos. El
tocado y la ropa de cada día”.
*Revista de Dialectología y
Tradiciones Populares*, Vol. 59,
No. 2 CSIC, 2004. p. 85.

In the Jewish faith, women were traditionally forbidden from showing their hair after marriage, so the *keswa el kbira* would always incorporate at least one form of head covering. The *fechtul* is a rectangular silk scarf measuring approximately 150 x 350 cm that is worn over the head and tied at the back, with the ends either left to hang down the back or tied with a ribbon. It is usually horizontally striped and includes gold thread in the weft.

The *swalf* is a band of stiff cloth, measuring 15 cm across, with two silk braids – *dlalat* or *crinches* – that fall across the wearer’s forehead and temples to imitate hair. The word is related to the Spanish *crin* and *crencha*, which were decorated with fine silk ribbons. The *swalf* could be worn at the nape or the temples, in which case an additional pair of braids was used in order for the wearer to have two on either side of her face⁹. Though in traditional

Moorish slipper (*Rihiyyat el-kbar*).
National Museum of Anthropology
in Madrid. CE3427. Photograph:
Arantxa Boyero Lirón.



communities Jewish brides were required to cover their hair, the wearing of wigs was permitted provided that no human hair had been used in their making. This spawned any number of ingenious ideas in both urban and rural communities, where we find examples of the use of wool, silk, goat hair, cow tails and even ostrich feathers, covered with shawls, crowns and silver adornments to create styles that are sometimes amusing and on occasion surprisingly burlesque.

The *swalf* was typical of Rabat and was designed to compensate for the covering of the bride's natural hair. It was worn over the *fechtul*, in a conical form, and covered with an embroidered silk shawl, or *sebniyya*, decorated with tassels.

Jewish women would typically cover their hair with a woollen shawl when in public. For special occasions, however, the ladies of the wealthiest classes would wear a Manila shawl of white silk, richly patterned with white silk embroidery. Such items were costly, attainable only by the richest families.

Rihiyyat el-kbar* or *muquwara

The shoes worn with the *berberisca* dress have varied over the years and have followed various trends. Jewish women would commonly wear a Moorish-style slipper, open at the heel and embroidered with silk and gold thread.

The shoes worn by Jewish women were different to those worn by Muslims, based on the more open European model with a raised heel. In most cases they were the same colour as the *keswa el kbira* and decorated with gold embroidery.

Boots and ankle boots have also been worn with the *keswa el kbira*, generally woven from velvet to match the colour of the other garments.

Jewellery

The *keswa el kbira* was often heavily accessorised, with many types of jewellery worn depending on region and social status. Jewellery has always been important to the women of Morocco, whether Jewish, Muslim or Berber.



Sfifa and fixing for headpiece.
Sephardic Museum in Toledo.

As well as a solid financial investment, jewellery was an expression of social standing and a source of security for women, who were entitled to keep their jewels if they divorced or were widowed.

Jewish gold and silversmiths produced the vast majority of jewellery worn in urban and rural Morocco. The reason for this monopoly was twofold. On the one hand, the creation of gold and silver items to be sold above the intrinsic value of the metals themselves was likened to usury and was therefore deemed reprehensible by Morocco's Maliki Sunni Muslims. On the other, it was popularly believed that anyone involved in the smelting of metals was in league with the *djnnun*, or spirits.

Of the most prominent examples of traditional jewellery is the *sfifa* or *taj*, a tiara set with pearls and precious stones such as rubies. Only the richest families could hope to own such items, and they were frequently loaned to brides from less wealthy backgrounds. Tiaras, diadems and crowns were sometimes created from embroidered fabric adorned with precious or semi-precious stones while in other cases they were true pieces of jewellery and precious metalwork.

As with the *keswa el kbira* itself, the jewellery of urban Jewish women was strongly influenced by the styles of southern Europe, which was apparent in both the forms and the names of various items. For example, the *tazra* ("rich") necklace was decorated with hanging flowers or rosettes called *rarnati*, meaning

Heavy gold earrings (*kbach khras* or *khras mara*). Sorolla Museum. Madrid. 70159/1. Photograph: Susana Vicente Galende.
[See details.](#)



10 FRAILE GIL, José Manuel “La indumentaria sefardí en el Norte de Marruecos. El tocado y la ropa de cada día”. *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares*, Vol. 59, No. 2 CSIC, 2004. p. 87.

“of Granada”, which sat between filigree balls and pearls. On traditional medallions, Hispanic-Moorish decoration was apparent in the rosettes, while more recent examples are set with pearls and precious stones such as emeralds.

Jewish women have traditionally worn white pearl necklaces, which symbolise fertility and good luck. Another characteristic motif on the pendants and rings worn by Jewish women was the *tayr*, or bird, an elegant sparrow-like form that can be dated back to the Byzantine period. It was also traditional to wear ankle bracelets called *kholkhals*, *jarjal* or *jarjales*¹⁰. Finally, Jewish brides, particularly in Tétouan and Tangier, would wear a pair of heavy gold earrings, *kbatch khras* or *khras mara*, set with pearls and precious stones in the Spanish style. These earrings were so heavy that they were not hung from the ear but instead fixed to the shawl, the gold rings hanging on either side of the face. ●

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Textile treasure:

The collection of the Holy Museum of la Concepción de la Orotava

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The first record of Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception of La Orotava (Tenerife) dates back to 1503, when a small hermitage was built. In time, the building would become established as a characteristic Canarian church with three naves, side chapels and Mudejar coffered ceilings. However, between 1704 and 1705 the course of history took an unexpected turn when the island was hit by a series of earthquakes; the structure of the church was badly damaged, and it had to be rebuilt from its very foundations.

Thus, in 1768 began the reconstruction of the church that would become the paradigm of Baroque architecture in the Canary Islands: built in the form of a basilica, with three naves, barrel vaults and a dome above the transept. The work was completed in 1788.

From its beginnings, the parish of La Concepción has been home to a large collection of artistic creations, now housed in the seven rooms of the Holy Museum: painting, sculpture, metalwork in gold and silver, furniture and, in the case that interests us here, textiles.

The church acquired this heritage through a variety of means which have all, in their own way, contributed to shaping its history. The first pieces to arrive were bought by the parish factory, above all during the reconstruction process between 1768 and 1788). These pieces reflected the aesthetics of the new project, a process of renovation that ranged over all the arts. The second wave of acquisitions dates from 1767, when the Jesuit Order was expelled from Spain and their possessions passed from the San Luis Gonzaga College to the parish. The third source comprised private donations from families which still today possess pieces of genuine artistic value which they acquired for their old oratories and private hermitages; and finally, after the process of disentailment in the early nineteenth century, the church's collection was enlarged by the arrival of several pieces from convents.

All these processes greatly expanded the number of pieces in the church's possession. Perhaps above all, its textile collection deserves special mention. Considered one of the most important in the Canary Islands in terms of both quantity and quality, the repertoire of textile pieces of the church of La Orotava ranges widely in terms of style, period and origin.



Damask chasuble from Spain (detail), seventeenth century.

¹ SANTANA RODRÍGUEZ, Lorenzo, *Los bordadores en Tenerife durante el siglo XVI*, Anuario del Instituto de Estudios Canarios, 46; 2001, pp. 493-504.

² PÉREZ MORERA, Jesús, *Oro, plata y sedas: Notas sobre los tejidos y ornamentos de la Parroquia de La Concepción de La Orotava*, Programa de Semana Santa, Ayuntamiento de La Orotava, 2001.

³ PÉREZ MORERA, Jesús, "Casulla de los Mártires", en *La Huella y la Senda*, Islas Canarias, 2004, pp. 572-574.

As early as the sixteenth century the church owned liturgical ornaments¹, even though nothing remains from those early times because of the fragility of the materials used. However, there is documentary evidence of the existence of a *pallium embroidered in gold and silks* commissioned to the embroiderer Alonso de Ocampo in 1569 and finalized by Gaspar Sanchez, with a monstrance flanked by two angels and the evangelists in the corners and a *set of vestments of red velvet with embroidery in silks*, recorded in an inventory of 1686, described as already *old* but *healthy*.²

The patrimony from the seventeenth century is also very scarce. Among the few pieces in the collection which date from that period are the damasks *of Spain*. Due to their technical characteristics, damasks are among the most durable of fabrics. The damasks *of Spain* come from the cities of Toledo, Granada, Seville and Valencia and display geometrical plant motifs.³ Among them are four chasubles, two in red and two in green, and an altar frontal which as well as plant motifs depicts pairs of birds facing each other, a very common feature in later models.

In the eighteenth century began the production of what were known as Palma damasks, with large plant motifs such as flowers, leaves, stems, and pomegranates occupying the entire width of the piece. Examples of these



Altar frontal with dragon decoration (detail), Philippines.



Costume with bird design (detail), France, eighteenth century.

damasks present in the collection comprise a range of vestments, chasubles and capes in crimson, green, blue and pink. The collection also includes several damasks from Italy like the one used to make one of the purple sets of vestments.

The eighteenth century was the period of La Orotava's maximum splendour. A great number of acquisitions were made over the course of this century, propitiated also by the reconstruction of the church. Significant purchases were made not only in Spain but abroad, with the incorporation of two altar frontals from the East, one of them decorated with dragons inside medallions embroidered on a delicate background of silk taffeta with threads in different colours.



4 PÉREZ MORERA, Jesús; RODRÍGUEZ MORALES, Carlos. "Oro, plata y sedas. Los ornamentos sagrados", *Arte en Canarias. Vol. II: Del Gótico al Manierismo*. Gobierno de Canarias. 2008, pp. 251 ff.

Among the European works, the creations of French origin deserve special mention. There are a number of pieces in silk, mostly from Lyon; one of them is a costume of the Virgin made from a silver fabric with birds made with a swivel weave in silk, in which the asymmetrical arrangement, the depiction of nature and the general aesthetic feel all reflect the fascination with the East that prevailed in Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century.

However, the fabrics produced in Spain are the most abundant. For a long time Seville was one of the main suppliers of embroidery, silks and brocade.

Reminiscent of Sevillian models is a crimson costume of the Virgin of the Dormition, in a bizarre design with floral elements and silver braid. The exquisite foliage in this costume bears witness to a profound admiration for nature. The use of a wide range of colours in the flowers seeks to achieve a naturalistic effect – *individual portraits*, as Professor Pérez Morera⁴ would say – motifs of great symmetry and a technique that reproduces the *effect of painting with threads* so typical of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Cadiz was also an important focus of production of the works in the collection. Among the examples of embroideries from Cadiz are the capes of *viaticum*, made in silver fabric with floral embroidery in gold relief.

Cape of *viaticum* (detail), Cadiz,
early nineteenth century.



Chasuble from the chapel of Our Lady of Carmen, Cadiz, late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century. [See detail.](#)



5 A.P.M.N.S.C. 148.
1.3.1.1. (Legajo cuentas de fábrica: Cuentas dadas por el Mayordomo Antonio Monteverde y Rivas, 1819-1827).

6 We thank Arabella León Muñoz, of the Moncada Silk Museum, for identifying the designs.

From the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth is a chasuble of white satin silk embroidered in coloured silks, metallic threads and sequins. The decoration comprises three vertical stripes and the two sides have twisted loops which differ from each other. The front has the same decoration and the back displays the eucharistic allegory of the pelican feeding its young.

Another nineteenth-century piece and also from Cadiz is the *pallium of Corpus*⁵. Paid for by the Monteverde family – one of the main promoters of the feast of Corpus Christi – it was made in smooth white satin silk with highly symmetrical embroidery in gold relief, and in its centre mystical lamb above the Book of the Seven Seals, which bears the initials of the Seven Sacraments. The whole of this motif is made in coloured silks and surrounded by gold embroidery, using laminated threads, silk twists and brocades.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth, Valencian silk production was at its peak. The city was one of Europe's leading producers and was home to several highly acclaimed silk manufactures. The Museum has several pieces made by one of these manufactures, the Garín factory. From the same factory are designs such as [San Felipe](#), Nacimiento, Reyes, Escorial, Alcázar, Cáliz Corona, Blasco and Jacquard, in chasubles, capes and costumes of the Virgin⁶.



Mitre of Bishop Luis Folgueras y Sión, 1769-1850 (detail), twentieth century.

7 PÉREZ MORERA, Jesús, *El arte de la Seda: el tejido litúrgico en Canarias (Los ornamentos de la Catedral de La Laguna)*, Revista de Historia Canaria, 184; 2002, pp. 275-316.

Also from the nineteenth century is the set of pontifical ornaments of Bishop Luis Folgueras y Sión, the first bishop of the Diocese of Tenerife, which was established in 1819. The cape and its matching mitre are made of a series of embroideries on white silk with motifs and techniques typical of the French fashions of the time: the Empire style, a figurative symbolism depicting eucharistic allegories, and the use of sequins and embroidery in gold and silver⁷.

The vestments of Corpus, or the rich vestments of the parish, are among the most emblematic sets of liturgical garments in the collection. This suit was commissioned to Lyon by Antonio Monteverde y Rivas, in charge of the factory between 1819 and 1827, and was made out of a silver fabric with flowers inside a lozenge-shaped grid formed by laurel leaves worked in gold. The ladies of the Monteverde family made the suit and enriched the fabric by adding and sequins. The piece is still used in the celebration of the Infraoctava of Corpus Christi.

Antonio Monteverde also acquired another series of pieces in an attempt to revive a ceremony that was falling into disuse, among them an embroidered



Vestments for the celebration of Corpus Christi (detail), Lyon, 1819-1827.

8 GOYANES CAPDEVILLA, José, *Las Antiguas Industrias de la Seda en Tenerife*, Talk at the Círculo de Bellas Artes de Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Tenerife, 1938.

9 DARIAS PRÍNCIPE, Alberto, *El papel de la Iglesia en el desarrollo de los textiles en Canarias: el caso de la seda*, *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos*, 58; 2012, pp. 857-890.

standard which he obtained in Cadiz together with other materials (gold thread, glass, and sequins) for the creation of the banner of the Sacramental Brotherhood which was made by his wife, his mother-in-law and sisters-in-law.

The production of what was known as *island silk* expanded notably in the late seventeenth century⁸. There were silk-making centres in La Gomera, Gran Canaria and Tenerife, where the climate allowed the cultivation of mulberry trees and silkworms and stimulated the development of the industry. One of the towns most involved in silk production was Icod de los Vinos which produced taffetas and a range of other fabrics. In 1777, there were five looms in La Orotava and in the Puerto de La Orotava the Cólogan family had a factory.

These workshops seem to have been the origin of the island silk items in the collection. One of them is a [taffeta “guitar” chasuble](#) in red and white with yellow silk braid of great originality, currently used in the ceremony in honour of San Isidro and called the *turronera* by the townspeople, because of its likeness with the typical Canary *turron*⁹.

As we can see, the Museum’s “Treasure of La Concepción” collection presents a very extensive set of resources for the study of textiles. Here we have presented just a brief introduction. Further studies are needed to explore specific textile types in more detail: the linen, for instance, merits an in-depth study, given its abundance inside the collection. ●

Silk, saints and relics. The medieval fabrics collection at the CDMT¹

by SÍLVIA SALADRIGAS CHENG,
Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil - CDMT

Coptic textiles, Gothic velvets, Valencian, Italian and French silks, oriental embroidery, cashmere shawls, printed textiles, liturgical objects, Modernista fabrics ... the collections of the Textile Museum and Documentation Centre (CDMT) of Terrassa are diverse and varied. This paper showcases one of the CDMT's many collections, its medieval fabrics collection, which contains significant examples from a period in which the objects were valuable and highly prized, appeared in inventories and wills, and were represented in detail in paintings and altarpieces. They are pieces that we must study if we are to understand the society and the cultural period of which they formed a part.

¹ This paper is an updated version of a paper published in the journal *Terme* no. 21 (2006).

² In addition to the Textile Museum and Documentation Centre (CDMT), there are textile collections in the Marès Lace Museum (Arenys de Mar), Textile Printing Museum (Premià de Mar), Design Museum (Barcelona), Episcopal Museum of Vic, Museum of Montserrat, Museo del Traje (Madrid), Museum of Medieval Fabrics (Las Huelgas, Burgos), Museum of Decorative Arts (Madrid), Lázaro Galdiano Museum (Madrid), Valencia de Don Juan Museum (Madrid), Archaeological Museum (Madrid), Museum of León Cathedral, etc.

The consideration of textiles as historical documents in their own right is not a very common practice in our country, despite the complete and representative collections of different cultures, historical periods and geographical areas that are preserved in various centres and museums². For many years, their study, if carried out at all, has been done only in connection with iconographic motifs and has been based on stylistic comparison with other arts. In addition, studies of the written (literary or notarial) sources have found elements for economic and philological evaluation, but they have often proceeded along parallel paths without any connection to the real objects themselves.

The lack of knowledge about centres of production and the individuals who created the objects, together with limited written documentation that would actually permit identification of origins and types, turns any reconstruction of the history of textiles into an enormous, challenging but appealing jigsaw, a task in which no collected information, however little, should be ignored.

Today, the study of historical textiles is approached from a comprehensive, multidisciplinary perspective; iconography, style and written documents are analysed in parallel with the technical aspects of the objects. Attention is paid to elements such as the twisting of threads, the type of material used, the weaves and densities of fabrics, and the colourants and their mordants, because



Fig. 1. *Tejido de las Águilas* of St Bernard of Calvo. CDMT 307. Samite, silk, eleventh century.





Fig. 2. *Tejido de los Grifos*, from the reliquary of Santa Librada. CDMT 6469. Silk, gold thread, twelfth century. [See detail.](#)

3 A good example of these practices can be seen in the projects in which the CDMT has participated: *Caracterización tecnológica y cronológica de las producciones textiles coptas: antecedentes de las manufacturas textiles altomedievales españolas* (HUM2005-04610), a study on colourants in the Mediterranean area carried out by the Leitat Technological Centre in Terrassa; the current project *Caracterización de las producciones textiles de la tardoantigüedad y Edad Media temprana: tejidos coptos, sasánidas, bizantinos e hispanomusulmanes en*

each production area had different working traditions and only by taking a view of the whole can we establish chronologies, geographical origins and routes of technological, commercial and cultural transfer that will be valid and well-substantiated.³

The dispersion of textile heritage is another constant that complicates its study. We find fragments of the textiles catalogued in the CDMT scattered among other collections, national museums, museums abroad, churches and cathedrals. Throughout history, silk fabrics have been considered luxury goods, spoils of war, relics, objects of exchange among collectors and, in the worst-case scenario, items for financial profit derived from cutting them into fragments

las colecciones públicas españolas (HAR2008-04161); or the project called *Tejidos Medievales en Iberia y el Mediterráneo* funded by the Max van Berchem Foundation (Geneva) and the Pasold

Foundation (UK) to complete an epigraphic study of said textile corpus; BORREGO, P., SALADRIGAS, S., ANDRES-TOLEDO, M.A. "Technical and symbolic study of two complete mediaeval cloths

found in Carrión de los Condes, Spain. The textiles of Sant Zoilus", in: *Actas del V Simposio Internacional Purpureae Vestes*, University of Valencia, 2016.

Fig. 2b. *Tejido de las Águilas*,
from the reliquary of Santa
Librada. CDMT 6470. Lampas,
silk, gold thread, twelfth century.
[See details.](#)



Fig. 3. Saint Nicholas wearing chasuble with *pallia rotata* decoration. Wall painting from Santa Maria de Taüll, MNAC 200414-000.





Fig. 4. *Tejido de las Estrellas*, fragment from the vestments of St Valerius, CDMT 2374. Pseudo-lampas, silk, gold thread, thirteenth century. [See detail](#).

4 CARBONELL, S. “L’inici del col·leccionisme tèxtil a Catalunya i la formació dels museus tèxtils: publicacions, exposicions, col·leccions i col·leccionistes”, in: *El col·leccionisme i l’estudi dels teixits i la indumentària a Catalunya. Segles XVIII-XX*. <http://goo.gl/Uk223b> [consulted on 19/05/2017]; MARTÍN, R.M. “La dispersión de los tejidos medievales: Un patrimonio troceado”, in: *Lambard. Estudios de arte medieval*. [Institute for Catalan Studies] XII, 2000; TORRELLA y NIUBO, F. *El coleccionismo textil en Cataluña. Discurso de ingreso en la Real Academia Catalana de Bellas Artes*. Barcelona, 1988.

and selling them piecemeal. Because of this, it is necessary today to regroup the various related fragments first in order to study them.

For this reason, it is important to have “framework” objects to serve as a point of reference – objects that have a name and surname, so to speak – that have been identified precisely, studied and analysed, thus enabling us to establish groups from which to draw general conclusions.

This is one of the values of the CDMT’s medieval fabrics collection: it features a number of such “star” objects.

The interest in collecting ancient, artistic and exotic textiles first appeared in the late nineteenth century with the resurgence of medieval and Renaissance motifs promoted by the Arts and Crafts movement in England and with the emergence of revivalist styles. Another major contributor was the publicising and dissemination of objects unearthed by archaeological expeditions in Egypt and the Middle East from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This was the context for the creation of the major collections that would later form part of museum and private collections⁴.

Objects produced in silk with decorative, geometrical or figurative motifs were the most highly prized and, for that reason, it became a common practice



Fig. 5. Cloth from Villalcázar de Sirga, CDMT 300. Taqueté, silk and gold thread, thirteenth century.

5 *Colección Viñas de tejidos antiguos*. Diputació de Barcelona, 1957.

6 CDMT rec no. 307, 310, 3929, 3932.

7 GUDIOL, J. "Lo sepulcre de Sant Bernat Calvó, bisbe de Vic", in: *Primer Congrés d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó*. vol. II, Barcelona, 1913.

to cut them up to preserve or exchange the parts considered interesting. Today this fragmentation makes it difficult to ascertain the original provenance of the fabrics, even when whole works are preserved in collections.

In the case of the CDMT, the medieval objects as a whole come from two of the most important textile collections in the country. The first is the collection of Ignasi Abadal, which was acquired by Josep Biosca and then donated by Biosca to the city of Terrassa to form the basis of the Biosca Textile Museum in 1946, the original core of today's CDMT. The second is the collection of Ricard Viñas Geis, which was sold to the Barcelona Provincial Council between 1951 and 1957.⁵ Most of the fabrics are silk and date from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. They are representative of various styles or cultural moments within this chronological period and have been attributed geographically to Byzantium, Al-Andalus or Islamic Spain, the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, the south of France and Italy.

Highlights from the eleventh century include the pontifical vestments of St Bernard of Calvo,⁶ the bishop of Vic from 1233 to 1243. This is one of the few representative examples of the linkage between the historical documentation and the preserved textile remains. Based on the documentation, Father Josep Gudiol⁷ gave a detailed description of the fabrics and of opening a wooden box in 1888 in which the remains or relics of the saint were found. Gudiol wrote: "... we removed the vestments which consisted of a white robe that was still well-preserved and inside, the remains or holy relics shrouded in another garment of badly faded colour and soil, so that it would probably have been the garment in which he was laid to rest in his first tomb. The original fabrics were considered relics, they were cut up and the fragments were distributed among the saint's followers."



Fig. 6. Embroidered fabric from Santa Clara del Astudillo, CDMT 6150, fourteenth century. [See detail.](#)

8 While this type of gilt material has hitherto been called *oro de Chipre* or *oropel*, there is currently a review of the designation as a function of the type of organic substrate involved (e.g., leather, gut or parchment).

Gudiol goes on to explain how, in 1890, a Barcelona collector whose name he does not mention but who was later identified as Francesc Miquel i Badia, “borrowed” a portion of the objects to study them, which he did, although he also sold them to other collectors. One of his buyers was Gaspar Homar, who then sent pieces to Ricard Viñas, who in turn sold them to the Diputació of Barcelona before they ultimately became part of the CDMT.

Of the items preserved in the CDMT, eight fragments of the fabric of the chasuble have been identified. This fabric is known as the “Tejido de las Águilas” or “The Eagle Fabric”. In addition, two fragments have been identified from the decorative band of the amice. The primary decoration of the chasuble is a two-headed eagle, with wings extended, its body facing forward and the two heads turned in profile. In its beak, the eagle holds a ring from a dangling chain and in its talons it clutches a lion. Geometrical and plant elements fill the bodies of the two animals. The motifs are arranged in horizontal bands that repeat the subject, while the bands are separated by incomplete semi-circles and there are rosettes in the interstices. [Fig. 1]

Technically, the garment is a samite with silk threads interwoven in both warp and weft. The colours are red for the background and dark green for the motifs, while the eagle’s talons and the ring it carries in its beak are yellow.

The two fragments of the decorative band are made of silk and organic gold leaf⁸ woven on taffeta using a tapestry technique. They bear an inscription in Arabic calligraphy and different decorative borders.

According to tradition, the “Tejido de las Águilas”, as well as the fabrics making up the two tunics, were spoils of war taken during the conquest

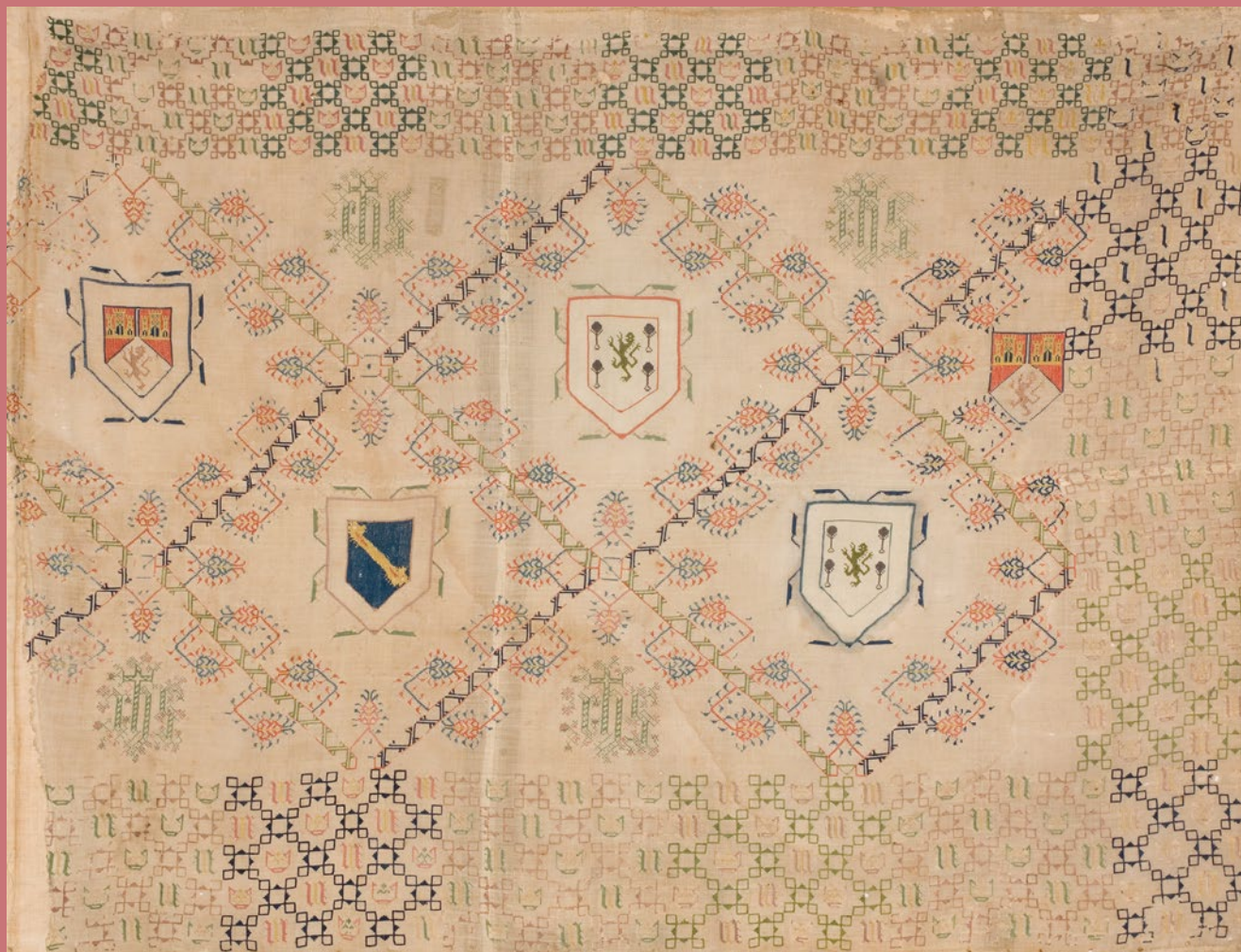


Fig. 7. Embroidered fabric from Santa Clara del Astudillo, CDMT 5844, fourteenth century. [See detail.](#)

9 COULIN WEIBEL, A. *Two Thousand Years of Textiles*. New York. The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1952; FLEMMING, E. *Historia del tejido. Ornamentos textiles y muestras de tejidos desde la Antigüedad hasta comienzos del siglo XIX, incluyéndose el Extremo Oriente y Perú*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, S.A., 1958; *L'Islam i Catalunya*. Lumberg, Museu d'Història de Catalunya, Institut Català de la Mediterrània. Barcelona, 1998. [Exhibition Catalogue]; OTAVSKY, K., MUHAMMAD 'ABBAS MUHAMMAD SALIM. *Mittelalterliche Textilien I Ägypten, Persien und Mesopotamien, Spanien und Nordafrika*. Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 1955.

10 CDMT reg. 6469, 6470.

of Valencia by King Jaume I (1232–1238), an event in which the bishop Bernard of Calvo took part. From its decoration, colours and technique, some scholars have linked the textile to Byzantine fabrics of the eleventh and twelfth centuries or to Andalusian fabrics from the period of the Taifa Kingdoms (1013–1086).⁹

The textile is a good example of the dispersion phenomenon characterising the objects: beyond the fragments in the CDMT, there are others in the Episcopal Museum of Vic; the Design Museum of Barcelona; the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, both in New York; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin; the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, and the Abegg-Stiftung Museum in Switzerland.

The fabrics originating from the relics of santa Librada¹⁰ [Fig. 2 and 2b] pose a similar problem: fragments are preserved in the Cathedral of Sigüenza, the Abegg Foundation, the Metropolitan Museum of New York and the Cleveland Museum of Art. They are part of a set of fabrics from the Almohad period (1143–1213) that display a high degree of homogeneity in their decoration and technique.

11 MASDEU, C., MORATA, L. *Las rutas de la seda. Cuaderno de viaje del CDMT*. Terrassa: Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil, 2000.

12 CDMT reg. 5776.

13 CDMT reg. 2959.

14 MAY, F.L. *Silk Textiles of Spain, Eighth to Fifteenth Century*. New York: The Hispanic Society of America, 1957; SHEPHERD, D.G. "Two Hispano-Islamic Silks in Diasper Weave". *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*. 1955.

15 CHALMETA, P. *El señor del Zoco en España*. Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1973.

The main decorative element of the two CDMT pieces features large-diameter tangent circles arranged in horizontal registers. On one of the two pieces, the circles contain pairs of opposing griffins with their heads turned to face one another. A schematic depiction of the Tree of Life separates them, while also serving as the axis of symmetry for a mirror repetition of the entire motif. On the second piece, the circles contain an eagle with extended wings that looks alternately right and left. The central motif in both fabrics is complemented by small gazelles, deer, harpies, pearlescent ribbons and, on the fabric with the eagles, Kufic inscriptions that have been translated as Baraka (Benediction).

The colour of the background is beige and the motifs are red. The beaks and talons are made of silk thread braided with gold leaf. Technically, the two pieces are worked on lampas and present a special characteristic in the rhythm of the warp threads and in how the gold threads of the swivel weft are worked. These unique characteristics have also been identified in the fabric of the chasuble of St John the Hermit, which has served as a reference to date and place the others. This chasuble, which is preserved today in the village of Quintanaortuño (Burgos), incorporates a band with Arabic calligraphy in which it is possible to read the name of the Almohad emir Ali ibn Yusuf, who ruled in Al-Andalus and North Africa between 1106 and 1142. This fact justifies attributing the entire set to the late eleventh or early twelfth century.

The CDMT also contains other interesting objects from this group of fabrics.¹¹ One corresponds to the "Tejido del Águila" of Sant Pere Cercada¹² and comes from the cathedral of Barcelona; another is the fragment of the cape of san Pedro de Osma, who died in 1109 (Burgo de Osma, Soria)¹³. On a larger fragment of the same cape that is conserved in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, you can appreciate the composition of the design. Inside large circles appear pairs of opposing harpies, mounted on lions and separated once again by a schematic depiction of the Tree of Life.

Inside the tangent decorations between the circles, there is an inscription that might be translated as "This is of what is made in Baghdad; watch over it, God." The researchers who have studied the object have reached the conclusion that its obvious references to Spanish calligraphy suggest that in reality the inscription is a false attribution intended to drive up the price of the textile, leading to the group becoming known as "imitation Baghdad" fabrics.¹⁴ The confirmation of commercial fraud in general is evident from the "Hisba Treaty" of Al-Saqati (11th-12th cent.), which includes fabrics and refers to fraud in relation to their dyes, the size of pieces and the quality of the materials.¹⁵

The type of decoration and its formal conception, organised in tangent circles arranged in horizontal registers, bear a direct relation to the Sassanid Persian



Fig. 8. Embroidered fabric from Santa Clara del Astudillo, CDMT 5845, fourteenth century. [See detail.](#)

16 PARTEARROYO, C.
“Tejidos andalusies”. In:
Artigrama, no. 22, 2007.

17 CDMT rec. no. 124, 2374,
2979, 3936, 3937, 3938.

18 CDMT rec no. 300, 2977.

19 CDMT rec no. 2974,
6162; *Vestiduras ricas. El
Monasterio de las Huelgas y
su época 1170-1340*. Lunweg
Editores, Patrimonio
Nacional, 2005 [Exhibition
Catalogue].

20 CDMT rec no. 5844, 6150,
5845.

tradition and to the sculptural elements of the Caliphate and Almoravid period of Al-Andalus (1086-1143). You can also see similar Islamic-influenced motifs in Romanesque capitals, sculptures and paintings: the tunic manicata of the Batlló Majesty has a design with large circles; eagles and griffins appear in the cloisters of Santa Maria de Ripoll and Sant Pere de Galligants. Numerous paintings and miniatures feature characters and decorative elements that reflect this type of decoration, which is called *pallia rotata* in the documents of the period. [Fig. 3]

After the Almohads rose to power (1147-1161), aesthetic changes occurred in the decorative motifs. Their rigour in the interpretation of Koranic law led to a shift from figurative forms representing animals and people toward much more rigid geometrical compositions.¹⁶

The CDMT also preserves some representative examples from this time. They include the various fragments of the vestments of St Valerius¹⁷ [Fig. 4], fabric from the garments of the Infante Philip of Castile from Villalcázar de Sirga¹⁸ [Fig. 5] and some fragments that can be linked to a set of funerary objects found in the Abbey of Santa María la Real de las Huelgas and dated to the thirteenth century.¹⁹

Also notable for their uniqueness are three embroidered fabrics²⁰ that are attributed to María de Padilla (died 1361) from the Royal Convent of Santa Clara in Astudillo (Palencia). The three fabrics are made of linen embroidered with different types of stitching in polychrome silks of green, blue, pink, yellow, gilt and metallic thread.

The largest piece (128 x 233 cm) [Fig. 6] repeats the monogram IHS in a herringbone pattern inside a crowned form from which emerge small flowers that alternate with stars and the Padilla family's coat of arms three times.

The second-largest piece (113 x 48 cm) [Fig. 7] is not complete. The decoration that draws a frame around the main elements is unfinished on the left side (photo 4). In the central area, geometrical motifs and schematic flowers form

lines that create diamond-shaped spaces, which contain the Padilla family's coat of arms twice, two coats of arms of the Enríquez family and a coat of arms of the Order of the Band. The monogram of Christ repeats four times and the effect of a frame is created by a continuous mesh of small diamond shapes in which alternate the letter "M" and a very schematic eagle. Based on decoration and size, this piece, like the previous one, must have been used as an altar frontal.

The embroidery of the third textile (27 x 81 cm) [Fig. 8] differs from the previous two. The background of the decoration has been done in openwork, leaving the base fabric unworked so that the knotwork forms the decoration. This results in an effect of lacework that is highly attractive. The background fabric is ecru in colour and the embroidered parts are in greens and browns.

The identification of the coats of arms raises some dispute over the dating of the pieces. The Convent of Santa Clara in Astudillo is directly related to King Peter I of Castile and María de Padilla, who was the mother of four of his children but was not officially recognised as his spouse until after her death. The king founded the convent in the mid-fourteenth century as a place of retreat for María de Padilla, while he married several times for reasons of state. The technical features of the piece and its materials and design fit quite well with this story, but the presence of the coats of arms of the Enríquez family and the Order of the Band, in addition to the depiction of the Padilla family's coat of arms, which does not coincide exactly with the coats of arms that have hitherto been found for the Padillas, raises questions about whether the piece is really from the time of María de Padilla or may be from a later time period. This remains an outstanding issue, one of those issues that the fabrics often raise, requiring once more that the history, written documentation, technique and style be combined in the search for answers. ●

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Exhibition

MOLFORT'S: NOW THOSE ARE SOCKS!

Can Marfà Knitted Fabrics-Mataró Museum
From 10 November 2017 to 30 June 2018

■ Julià Guillaumon

Molfort's was sock manufacturer that led the way in Spain in the introduction of *rational advertising*, a new strategy using scientific methods as the basis for promoting industrial products that emerged in the 1930s, drawing on practices in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. Molfort's was set up in Mataró in 1927 and made its name with a spectacular launch campaign, a stand at the Barcelona International Exhibition of 1929 that recalled the work of Fortunato Depero for Campari, and a print advertising campaign built around two concepts: elegance ("La parte inferior del hombre adquiere mayor distinción" [The bottom garment for the man who buys distinction]) and saving ("Deu ralets ben gastats" [Ten ralets well spent]¹). The brand also sent persuasive messages to women: "s'ha acabat el sargir" [no more darning].

All of the techniques of rational advertising were employed to advertise Molfort's socks: the brand image (two dogs tussling over a sock) and logo; advertisements in the print press (designed by the Czech Karel Černý and the Catalan Josep Morell); comic strips drawn by celebrated artists and illustrators (Benejam, Benigani, Calsina, Castanys, Clavé, Grau Sala, Junceda, Kalders, Opisso, Passarell, Shum); a customer magazine; publicity on posters, banners, shop windows, hoardings, trams and illuminated signs; the branded van that led the publicity caravan of the *Volta a Catalunya*, and a character that became



uniquely associated with the brand: a wading bird presented either as a hotel bellboy or as a cyclist. Considerable work was also put into the branding of the products themselves: distinctive labels, wrapping paper, packaging, business gifts and stands at trade fairs.

The exhibition *Els mitjans Molfort's i la publicitat racional* [Molfort's socks and rational advertising] recreates this now forgotten world. For many, the name Molfort's is associated with the tales of Jep and Fidel from Madorell, which appeared in the comic book *Cavall Fort*. The exhibition concludes with an area on the relaunch of the Molfort's brand in the 1960s in the broader context of a Catalan cultural revival, through the work of the publicist Rovira Bruill. ■

¹ The *ral*, or its diminutive, *ralet*, was a coin worth one quarter of a *peseta*.

Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > [CATALÀ](#)

1st Colloquium of Textile and Fashion Researchers

■ Neus Ribas

The history of clothing and textile design has become an increasingly popular area of research in recent years, spawning numerous studies and projects. To give this research a platform, and to enable experts and enthusiasts to learn more about the various themes currently being investigated in Spain, the Textile and Fashion Study Group – affiliated to the Design History Foundation – has organised the 1st Colloquium of Textile and Fashion Researchers. This new event, which will feature contributions from more than 40 researchers and scholars, will be held on 17 and 18 November at the Terrassa Textile Museum and Documentation Centre, with the support of the Barcelona Design Museum, Terrassa City Council and the Institute of Industry.

For this inaugural edition a generalist approach has been taken, and papers have been received on a wide range of themes. The work presented will cover subjects as diverse as textile collecting, the history of clothing, textile art, major designers, anthropology, popular dress, and more... Given the large number of presentations, the event will be split into two sessions, the first focusing on fashion, the second specifically on textiles, to be held on Friday 17, from 9.30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Colloquium will begin with a talk by Lesley Miller, Senior Curator for Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, on the subject *Interwoven stories: 30 years of textile research*.

The provisional programme can be viewed on the website of the Design History Foundation, where those interested in attending may also register for the event. ■

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Exhibition catalogue

DRESSING THE BODY. Silhouettes and fashion, 1550-2015

Teresa Bastardes Mestre and Sílvia Ventosa Muñoz

Barcelona Design Museum, 2017

ISBN 978-84-9850-964-9

■ Assumpta Dangla

The Barcelona Design Museum is home to the permanent exhibition “Dressing the body. Silhouettes and fashion, 1550-2015”, for which an updated exhibition catalogue has recently been published. The central theme is a reflection on the body’s function as “a support for the clothing that gives it meaning and the individual’s first inhabited space”, explain Teresa Bastardes and Sílvia Ventosa, the exhibition’s curators. The discourse goes beyond materials and designers to look at how clothes alter the shape and appearance of our bodies.

The catalogue touches on many of the sociological aspects of fashion and discusses the five ways in which dress modifies our appearance: increasing, reducing, elongating, profiling and revealing. This critical approach takes on particular significance in a modern society that so closely aligns personal image with identity and social communication. Pilar Vélez, the Design Museum’s director, opens the exhibition catalogue by setting each collection in its context, explaining its origins, its value, and the effort expended by the museum in conserving its exhibits.

The main body of the catalogue charts the history of clothing and fashion from the mid-sixteenth century to the present, structured by the changes in silhouette that define distinct periods: from the slimming attire of the knight and courtesan it moves on to the liberation of the body with the French Revolution, the extravagant and voluminous dress that gained favour among the middle classes, the bustle that drew focus to the rear of a lady’s dress, the deformities suffered by women as a result of the s-silhouette... We next learn about the disappearance of the corset,



the new silhouettes of haute couture, how ready-to-wear reveals the body, and how contemporary fashions profile, cover or reveal parts of the body. Each section combines a visual summary with descriptions of the items on display and is completed by the presentation of a contemporary design that draws on the forms of the past.

There is also an interesting chapter on Spanish fashion designers, with an extensive selection of photographs presented alongside biographies written by the fashion historian Laura Casal-Valls, and an obligatory look at the structure worn under

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clothes; the corsets, hoop skirts, bustles, brassieres and other items that shape the female silhouette and are among the most prized pieces in the Design Museum's permanent collection.

The catalogue features texts by a variety of important figures known for their involvement or interest in fashion. It begins with a quotation from Balzac's *Traité de la vie élégante* and ends with an

extract from the work of Zygmunt Bauman, and each contribution reminds us that clothes and fashion form part of our individual and social identities. The catalogue gives us the keys to interpreting this unique collection at the Barcelona Design Museum and to viewing the history of clothing from a different perspective, at the centre of which are the forms of the body. ■

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This publication has been possible thanks to the participation of:



© Edition: Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil

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Translation

International House

Design adaptation, layout and digital edition

TxeniGil.com

Date of publication

November 2017

Dep. Leg. B 26.083/1998

ISSN 1139-028X

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