



# The Third Space

Textiles in Material and Visual Culture

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# The Third Space: Textiles in Material and Visual Culture

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*"It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew."*

— Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994)

*The Third Space: Textiles in Material and Visual Culture* explores textiles, paintings, and prints in the collections of the Five Colleges and Historic Deerfield Museum Consortium. A methodology of "connected history" unearths the intertwined histories of capitalism, globalization, colonialism, and empire that brought many of these objects to the Five Colleges' collections.

The exhibition adapts post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity and a "Third Space" to rehistoricize the objects housed in these collections. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha provides a theory of cultural hybridity ("neither the one nor the other") in an effort to displace legitimating narratives of cultural domination. Bhabha explains that the "Third Space" exists on the boundaries in-between forms of difference, in the intersections and overlaps across the spheres of class, gender, race, generation, nation, and location.

This provides a unique opportunity to read material and visual culture anew: What cultural, political, and economic contexts brought these particular objects to the Five College collections? What do these objects tell us about the history of institutional collections in Western Massachusetts? What effect does the medium of a digital exhibition have on tactile objects, such as textiles?



## Histories: Rehistoricizing Material and Visual Culture

“It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew.”

— Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994)<sup>1</sup>

Historian C.A. Bayly has described the long nineteenth century as one of rapidly developing connections between distant human societies, which simultaneously created hybrid polities, complex forms of global economic activity, and a heightened sense of difference between people.<sup>2</sup> In *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, Bayly focuses particularly on “global uniformities,” tracing the rise of similar forms of state, religion, political ideologies, and economic life in the nineteenth century. He argues that this process of global integration, transformed artistic traditions in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Polynesia. Non-European arts borrowed and appropriated European ideas and techniques, while design motifs and styles from around the world made their way into European painting, sculpture, and decorative arts.

At the same time, the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of decorative arts produced for mass markets. The notion of interconnectedness provides a useful starting point to examine the historical context of visual and material culture in the Five College collections. This exhibition situates the objects and collections of the Five Colleges within a connected history of global integration. Many of the objects included in the exhibition occupy an ambiguous space between East and West, which encourages us to ask: what cultural, political, and economic contexts created the space for objects like this to be produced, circulated, and collected?

The historical processes of capitalism and globalization form the foundation of Bayly’s analysis of how art changed in the nineteenth century. By 1914, elite and popular art became commodified, and new locations of art emerged in the museum and the market. In his discussion of how globalization transformed the production of decorative arts in China, Bayly finds that pottery once made for the imperial house were now made for the market. Hybrid objects, “part European, part Chinese” now moved along trade routes to the living rooms of the rising international middle class.<sup>3</sup> Textiles, and particularly Indian shawls, followed suit. The rise of factory production resulted in the rapid elimination of

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<sup>1</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004)

<sup>3</sup> Bayly (2004), p. 371.

artisan textile industries in South Asia and the Middle East, while British textile-makers worked to use and adapt the styles and symbols of Indian producers. The Indian shawl, which once meant a pledge of royalty and the sign of its wearer's aristocratic merit, became a model for 1830s Scottish industrialists seeking to mass-produce Indian styles to sell on a global market.<sup>4</sup>

A textile fragment in the Mead Art Museum's collection, believed to be of Indian or Persian origin, functions in this exhibition as representative of an early nineteenth-century Indian shawl.<sup>5</sup> The fragment, along with many other objects, was acquired by Amherst College in 1929 as a gift from conservationist, collector, and philanthropist George Dupont Pratt (Amherst College Class of 1893). The number of objects donated to Amherst College in his name illustrates Pratt's massive collection of pottery and textiles.<sup>6</sup> The shawl fragment in question features a repeating *boteh* motif composed of several colors: blue, green, red, and yellow. The *boteh*, or stylized leaf, motif is commonly referred to as paisley, named after Paisley, a town near Glasgow in Scotland, which became well-known for textile production. This motif also appears in a polychrome block printed shawl at Historic Deerfield. This nineteenth-century shawl is believed to be of French origin, but there is some uncertainty in this attribution.<sup>7</sup> In the nineteenth century, shawls became a ubiquitous accessory in women's dress as they rapidly developed as an export item and Europeans began weaving their own shawls in imitation of Indian-produced examples.

While Bayly's discussion of nineteenth-century art is centered on globalization and capitalism, art historian Natasha Eaton looks to empire and colonialism as the driving forces of transformation in material and visual culture. In *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860*, Eaton examines the transactions that took place between the British metropole and colonial India. She focuses particularly on the junctures where Indian and British artistic practices came together to produce "weird pictures that foreground difference, repetition, and hybrid similitude."<sup>8</sup> Eaton explores the production and circulation of courtly art at the conjunction of colonial and imperial encounters, but her discussion of these encounters provides an important corrective to what Bayly's analysis lacks: a focus on the imperial, colonial contexts that facilitated global integration.

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<sup>4</sup> Bayly (2004), p. 372.

<sup>5</sup> Accession Number: AC T.1929.13

<sup>6</sup> A search query of "George D. Pratt" yields 300 object records on the [Five Colleges and Historic Deerfield Museum Consortium Collections Database](#).

<sup>7</sup> Accession Number: HD 89.074; This shawl is listed on the database as "possibly" French.

<sup>8</sup> Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860* (Duke University Press, 2013)



Bayly's story of globalization prioritizes the exchange of ideas and objects along global networks. In contrast, Eaton critiques the use of "exchange" as an art historical methodology. Instead, she focuses on how the colonial situation in India produced and circulated hybrid artworks. Eaton adapts this notion of hybridity from that of Homi K. Bhabha, who developed a theory of cultural hybridity in an effort to displace the legitimating narratives of cultural domination. In this case, the hybrid object is "neither one nor the other." The hybrid object is produced and circulated in a "Third Space," which exists on the boundaries in-between forms of difference and in the intersections of power. For Eaton, nineteenth-century Mughal art was produced within this colonial context. The hybrid object is a potentially useful way to understand some of the objects in the Five College collections. In particular, there are two textile fragments at Historic Deerfield with unclear origins.<sup>9</sup> According to faculty at the museum, they might have been produced in France or India. The ambiguous origin of these fragments suggest that they were produced during a period of time when global material culture underwent a process of similitude, and the textiles might be considered neither French nor Indian, but hybrid. Regardless of their origin, the fragments were collected by women in New England, likely from dealers, whose acquisition of the objects were facilitated by increased global integration.

Eaton's focus on power and the colonial context provides another means to analyze how some objects came to be here in the Pioneer Valley. The large number of nineteenth-century textiles in the collections at the Five College Museums can be attributed to the expansion of a global market for decorative arts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in which new locations for art emerged in the museum and the market. Wealthy alumni from Amherst, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges (and their families) collected fine pieces of decorative arts. Their gifts and bequests form the bulk of the collections at these institutions. Selected items include two *khörjin* (bag faces), one donated by the estate of Miss Isabel J. Turner (sister of James Turner, Amherst College Class of 1880) to the Mead Art Museum in 1951 and another donated to the Mount Holyoke Art Museum as a bequest of Eileen Paradis Barber in 1997.<sup>10</sup> Both were produced in rural regions at the borders between Iran and Azerbaijan (in the case of Turner's *khörjin*) and Iran and Pakistan (in the case of Barber's contribution). Similarly, Turkmen rugs have made their way into the Mead Art Museum's collections as gifts from notable alumni, George D. Pratt and William R. Mead (Amherst College Class of 1967).<sup>11</sup> It is unclear specifically how the donors acquired their collections, but they most likely purchased their textiles from art dealers.

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<sup>9</sup> Accession Numbers: HD 97.035 and HD T.093.

<sup>10</sup> Accession Numbers: AC 1951.179 and MH 1997.14.145.1.

<sup>11</sup> Accession Numbers: AC HTR 1936.24 and AC T.1929.14.

Finally, objects such as silk scarves from India are connected to nineteenth-century Christian missions. In 1859, Reverend Isaac Newton Hurd donated an Indian scarf to Mount Holyoke. He had spent over seven years as a missionary in Arcot and Chintadrepettah, India, prior to marrying Mount Holyoke Seminary alumna Rachel Loretta Cowles (Class of 1859) in 1860. There is little evidence surrounding the context in which Rev. Hurd donated the scarf, but it seems likely that he purchased the scarf while in India, and upon return to the United States, he gave it to Mount Holyoke Seminary. Rev. Hurd served about three years on the North Alcot Mission of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of America, and for four years on the Madras Mission of the American Board in Chintadrepettah. Protestant missions in British India began in the eighteenth century and expanded over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These missions were intended to spread Christianity among the indigenous population, through preaching, translating texts into local languages such as Tamil, and establishing schools for converted Christian children.<sup>12</sup> The intertwined legacies of Christian missions and imperialism have been well documented in scholarship, suggesting that Christian missionary activity was central to the work of empire, in its British and American forms.<sup>13</sup>

The complex and hidden histories of how many objects came to be in the Five College collections can thus be viewed within the nexus of globalization, empire, colonialism, and modern capitalism. These large-scale historical processes produced the global integration that allowed these objects to travel as they did to Western Massachusetts. These objects have complex stories that surround their creation and their function as both decorative objects and as cultural capital. While we are fortunate to study these objects, it is imperative that we critically examine the circumstances that brought them to our museums. Indeed, as academic institutions we have an obligation to reveal the power structures and geographic webs that brought them to our museums, because these webs are integral to the provenience of the object.

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<sup>12</sup> *Proceedings of the South India Missionary Conference, held at Ootacamund* (Madras: D.P.L.C. Connor, 1858) pp. 27-30.

<sup>13</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Arun W. Jones, *Christian Missions in the American Empire: Episcopalians in Northern Luzon, the Philippines, 1902-1946* (Bern: Peter Land Publishing, Inc., 2003)

## Sites: Discourses of Culture and Sites of Interpretation

“Thus confined to a specific place and reduced to a set of taxonomic segments, art is immobilized, stamped as an essence of eternal history.”

— Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (1999)<sup>14</sup>

The medium of an online exhibition prompts questions about the possibilities and anxieties surrounding digital reproductions.<sup>15</sup> Since the emergence of mechanical means of reproduction, there has been debate over whether the reproduced image can substitute for the original work of art. Much of this debate has centered around Walter Benjamin’s now canonical essay from 1936, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Benjamin’s cultural critique has had intriguing implications for the digital reproduction of objects. Benjamin argued that the mechanical reproduction of art objects through photography had major repercussions for works of art in their traditional forms, and that the reproduction of an artwork does not retain the authenticity or the aura of the original artwork.

The authenticity of an object, he explained, is its presence in time and space, which cannot be recreated.<sup>16</sup> Benjamin’s contention was that this essence disappears through the process of mechanical reproduction, and he further examined how the mass production of images reproduction has the potential to transform the function of art. In Benjamin’s account, art depended on ritual prior to the advent of lithography and photography. What mattered was the mere existence of art and its capacity to facilitate rituals.

For Benjamin, mechanical reproduction thus emancipated art from this relationship and created new avenues for exhibiting art. In our age of mechanical reproduction, what matters more than the mere existence of art is the capacity of works to be publicly displayed. The act of displaying art in museum spaces has a distinctly modern history. The museum, like mechanical means of reproduction, emerged in the nineteenth century as a social, educational, and civilizing space. The mass-circulation of magazines and books, that also began in the late nineteenth century and increased exponentially in the twentieth century, expanded the capacity of art to be displayed in public settings. Yet in the digital age, scholars of visual and material culture remain concerned with whether the

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<sup>14</sup> Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999: p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Michael Marrinan, ed. *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Digital Age (1936),” *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

digital reproduction of an object can serve as an appropriate substitute for the original. Photographic reproductions have proved useful in teaching art history, but the reproduction is still disparaged as inauthentic, and thus less effective as an educational tool.

Author Talita Calitz asks, “Does digitally reproducing art take away its authenticity, its value from the time and space from where it was created and exhibited? Or does it emancipate it from its intended exclusivity for a minority group to the enjoyment of millions for free?”<sup>17</sup> Further, what how does digital reproduction expand our view of possible sites of cultural interpretation?

The emergence of the museum is also contemporary with the developments of modern capitalism and colonialism. Therefore, museums are not only institutions that house objects, but they are also discursive systems of cultural power and dominance. Objects in museums are classified by genre, school, style, material, or areas of origin. As this exhibition shows, the historical processes of globalization, colonialism, and modern capitalism facilitated the movement of cultural objects from West and South Asia to New England – the objects are available for us to examine, but are disconnected from their own pasts.

Objects on display in museums are made meaningful according to the historically and culturally informed interpretive frameworks into which they are placed, and the perspectives from which they are seen.<sup>18</sup> These interpretive frameworks are often deeply embedded in the politics of empire, nationalism, gender, and race. By containing a certain number of cultural productions, the museum says as much about the objects it contains as it does about what the institution excludes.<sup>19</sup> Further, however, what the museum does not show, what it does not make accessible, is also worthy of analysis.

The artworks selected for this exhibition are not on view in any of the galleries of the Five Colleges and Historic Deerfield Museum Consortium. The textiles often remain in storage until a patron requests to see them. This is largely for pragmatic reasons. Textiles are difficult to take out of storage, and even more difficult to display. For example, the Ersari main carpet in the Mead Art Museum is large and quite damaged.<sup>20</sup> It required two staff members to transport it to the study room and unroll it onto the table. At the Smith College Museum of Art, those textiles that are strong enough to hang require a hand

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<sup>17</sup> Talita Calitz, “Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Liberating or Cheapening?” *Memeburn*, August 17, 2012: <http://memeburn.com/2012/08/art-in-the-age-of-digital-reproduction-liberating-or-cheapening/>

<sup>18</sup> Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Vincent Pécoil, “The Museum as Prison: Post Post-Scriptum on Control Societies,” *Third Text*, vol. 18, no. 5, September 2004: p. 437.

<sup>20</sup> Accession Number: [AC HTR.1936.24](#). The carpet’s overall measurements are 66 3/16 in x 133 1/2 in; 168.1 cm x 339.1 cm.



stitched muslin "tube" across the back top through which a dowel covered in muslin is run, allowing the textile to hang from the dowel. More fragile textiles are exhibited either flat in a case (if small) or tilted on a cloth-covered board. Textiles are also light sensitive. Exposure to light for long periods of time results in fading dyes and disintegration of the material. The Hellen Geier Flynt Textile Gallery at Historic Deerfield offers one solution to light-sensitivity. The lights in the gallery are operated by motion-sensors. When the gallery is empty, the lights remain off. When visitors enter the gallery, the lights turn on. Each of these exhibition methods for textiles require staff, capital, and time—all of which are in limited supply in small museums.

In 2000, museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill identified the emergence of a new museum model, termed the "post-museum." Hooper-Greenhill describes the post-museum as a process or an experience, taking on different architectural forms, and centers on the spaces, concerns, and ambitions of communities. What might the post-museum look like in practice?

It is possible that the post-museum will consist of virtual collections that do not require a physical building, such as the emerging Google Cultural Institute, the Disability History Museum, or the Museum with No Frontiers.<sup>21</sup> According to Hooper-Greenhill's proposal, the post-museum must incorporate many voices and perspectives. It must do so through community outreach and collaborative research. At the Anacostia Museum in 1969, John Kinard curated an exhibition titled *The Rat: Man's Invited Affliction*, as a result of concerns shared by African Americans in the Anacostia community.<sup>22</sup> Rowena Stewart, who has at different points in her career directed the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society and the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum in Philadelphia, has developed a five-step approach for collecting African American documents and artifacts along with her associates.<sup>23</sup> This approach requires establishing close relationships with communities that have close knowledge with these materials, and fostering a strong community-museum trust.

The [\*ʔeləwkʷ – Belongings\*](#) exhibit at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver offers what appears to be the most promising possibility for Hooper-Greenhill's notion of the post-museum. This interactive exhibit was produced as a result of collaboration between the Museum, the Musqueam Indian Band, and Simon Fraser University's School of Interactive Arts and Technology (SIAT).<sup>24</sup> [\*ʔeləwkʷ – Belongings\*](#) makes use of a tabletop

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<sup>21</sup> Google Cultural Institute, *Google*: 2015; Disability History Museum, 2014; Museum with No Frontiers, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Edmund Barry Gaither, "Hey! That's Mine': Thoughts on Pluralism and American Museums (1992)," in *Reinventing the Museum*, ed. Gail Anderson, Alta Mira Press: Lanham and New York, 2004: p. 114

<sup>23</sup> Gaither, "Hey! That's Mine," 2004: p. 114

<sup>24</sup> Diane Luckow, "Museum of anthropology exhibit features SFU SIAT team's design and technology," *SFU News*, Simon Fraser University: January 21 2015.

display onto which visitors can place replicas of Musqueam archaeological artifacts and trigger information displays, videos, and audio narratives. The audio, photography, and video materials are informed by knowledge of members of the Musqueam Indian Band, an institution dedicated to preserving the living Musqueam culture and community. Using Musqueam artifacts and histories, the SIAT team created an interactive display on a Microsoft Surface. The [\*ʔeləwkw – Belongings\*](#) exhibit is part of a much larger exhibition produced through this collaboration, with the overall goal to help visitors learn about historical and contemporary Musqueam culture and community. What is most significant about this exhibit is the incorporation of local, indigenous voices to provide an interpretive framework for artifacts that takes into account Musqueam history and what meanings those objects have carried for those members of the Musqueam community – in addition to the meanings that these objects carry for those in the larger Vancouver community.

The online exhibition is one form that the post-museum might take, or it is one way that existing museums reach outside of their walls to reach broader audiences and to encourage community curation. Through the Institute for Curatorial Practice's partnership with Museums10 and the Five Colleges and Historic Deerfield Museum Consortium, students affiliated with the ICP can work with the collections in the Five Colleges and Museums10 to curate their own online exhibitions—often unearthing new stories, reading objects anew, and rehistoricizing our institutional pasts.

## The Objects: Textiles in Material and Visual Culture

Bag face (khorjin), Mead Art Museum, AC 1951.179

This textile is the front part of a *khorjin* (bag). It is believed to have been woven in the early twentieth century in a rural region at the border between northwestern Iran and Azerbaijan. It was woven for a purely utilitarian purpose – it is a bag, designed to help the owner carry things. It is made of wool, dyed red, brown, blue, and green.

This bag came to the Mead Art Museum from the Estate of Isabel J. Turner, of Montclair, New Jersey, and sister of James Turner (Amherst College Class of 1880). After James Turner's death in 1940, his art collection passed on to his sister. Following Isabel Turner's death, the collection went to the Department of Fine Arts at Amherst College. Like many alumni of Amherst College, James Turner had a unique financial relationship with Amherst College, having underwritten the building of the Little Red Schoolhouse (also known as the Amherst Day School) in 1937, and requesting that his art collection be transferred to the college.

A Five College Museums collections search for "Isabel J. Turner" turns up 161 viewing records. A search for "James Turner Estate (Class of 1880)" yields 83 records. Artwork acquired directly from James Turner's estate consisted entirely of 19th-century portraits by American steel-plate engraver and lithographer John Chester Buttre. The portion of his collection donated in Isabel Turner's name includes nineteenth-century American furniture, Middle Eastern textiles, and European ceramics, paintings, and sixteenth-century stained glass panels. It is unclear specifically how this *khorjin* came into James Turner's possession, but its presence among a large number of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century textiles in the Five College collections can be attributed to the expansion of a global market for decorative arts during this period.



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Persian  
Title: Bag (khorjin) face  
Date Made: 20th century (early)  
Type: Textile  
Materials: Woven; wool  
Place Made: Asia; Iran (northwest)  
Credit Line: From the Estate of Miss Isabel J. Turner

Katja Oxman's *In the Chamber*, Mead Art Museum, AC 2013.107

*In the Chamber* is a print made by artist Katja Oxman in 1989. This particular print is the 30th print out of 150 struck from the same plate. It came to the Mead Art Museum as an anonymous gift in 2013. Oxman's artwork consists of still-life prints, using Turkish carpets as a backdrop for an array of objects: boxes, fruits, flowers, feathers, small birds (in this case, a bird's nest with eggs), postcards, and reproductions of other artworks.

John Arthur describes Oxman's work: "Katja Oxman's still lifes allude to a tranquil, interior world. Their unidentifiable space serves as miniature rooms where seemingly nothing occurs beyond their perimeters. The prints are structured like tableaux and appear to be settings for parables with unknown or half-remembered connotations and pay homage to the artist's private history and cultural past. Each composition is filled with an elegant and a deeply personal array of objects. To quote Noël Arnaud, 'I am the space where I am'."<sup>25</sup>

The carpets provide an intricate, geometrically patterned backdrop to the objects Oxman has chosen to use. This juxtaposition invokes the long tradition of nestling an arrangement of objects in an exotic "oriental" carpet in European still-life paintings (including those of seventeenth-century painters Willem Kalf and Francesco Maltese). It has also been argued that the impulse and poetic temperament behind her still life prints lies closely to the shadow boxes of artist Joseph Cornell, filled with eclectic arrangements of objects (in an article by John Arthur). Oxman's artwork is thus connected to a long history of still-life and assemblage art, in which she displays her mastery of translating the material world into a two-dimensional print, through the process of etching.



Maker: Katja Oxman  
Culture: American, born in Germany (1942 - )  
Title: *In the Chamber*  
Date Made: 1989  
Type: Print  
Materials: etching and aquatint on woven paper  
Credit Line: Anonymous gift

Peter Blume's *Turkey Carpets*, Mead Art Museum, AC 2013.110

Maker: Peter Blume  
Culture: American, born in Belarus formerly the Russian Empire (1906-1992)  
Title: *Turkey Carpets*  
Date Made: 1968  
Type: Painting  
Materials: oil on canvas  
Credit Line: Gift of Edward L. and Patricia A. Trapp.



<sup>25</sup> John Arthur, "Katja Oxman: The Archeology of Images."



### Ersari main carpet, Mead Art Museum, AC HTR 1936.24

Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Turkoman (Ersari)  
Title: Ersari main carpet  
Date Made: 19th century (later)  
Type: Textile  
Materials: woven textile; wool  
Place Made: Asia; Transoxiana  
Credit Line: Bequest of William R. Mead



### Shawl weave, Mead Art Museum, AC T.1929.13

This shawl fragment is believed to be of Indian or Persian origin, and it functions in this exhibition as representative of an early nineteenth-century Indian shawl. This fragment, along with many other objects, was acquired by Amherst College in 1929 as a gift from conservationist, collector, and philanthropist George Dupont Pratt (Amherst College Class of 1893). Pratt's massive collection of pottery and textiles is illustrated by the number of objects donated to Amherst College in his name. This shawl features a repeating *boteh* motif composed of several colors: blue, green, red, and yellow. The *boteh*, or stylized leaf, motif is commonly referred to as paisley, named after Paisley, a town near Glasgow in Scotland, which became well-known for textile production. In the nineteenth century, shawls became a ubiquitous accessory in women's dress as they rapidly developed as an export item and Europeans began weaving their own shawls in imitation of Indian-produced examples.



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Indian or Persian  
Title: Shawl Weave  
Date Made: 19th century (early)  
Type: Textile  
Materials: Textile, woven  
Credit Line: Gift of George Pratt

### Shawl, Historic Deerfield, HD 89.074

This nineteenth-century shawl is believed to be of French origin, but there is some uncertainty in this attribution. It was a gift of Parker Dole Hubbard (1919-1994), of Sunderland, Massachusetts. It is made of wool or silk and wool, woven in a twill weave, and printed with a polychrome *boteh*, or paisley, design. This kind of asymmetrical shawl in which the main border appears only on two sides at a right angle, and only the outer border edges all four sides, was known in French as a *chale boiteaux*, or lop-sided shawl. These kinds of shawls grew out of the fashion for taking earlier long shawls (rectangular in shape) and cutting or altering them to make them wide and more square-shaped. While shawls could be worn in many different ways, the wearer of this shawl probably had the



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: French (possibly)  
Title: Shawl  
Date Made: 1820-1840  
Type: Clothing  
Materials: Textile: black twill weave wool or silk (warp) and

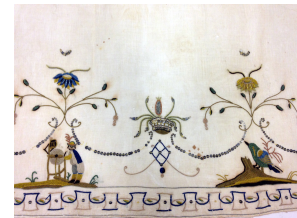
wider main borders hanging down, possibly turning inside/underneath at the top, outer horizontal border over. In the nineteenth century, shawls became a ubiquitous accessory in women's dress as they rapidly developed as an export item and Europeans began weaving their own shawls in imitation of Indian-produced examples: first in Norwich, England, and later in France. One such area included Paisley, Scotland, which soon gave its name to the stylized leaf or *boteh* common on many examples.

wool (weft); polychrome block printed design  
Place Made: France (possibly)  
Credit Line: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Parker Hubbard

#### Textile fragment, Historic Deerfield, HD 97.035

This embroidered fragment, with polychrome silk embroidery on a very fine cotton mull ground, has the additional embellishment of metal sequins and select areas of metallic thread. When new and shiny, these metallic elements would have added depth and sparkle to the garment. This fragment is believed to have been part of a gown or petticoat hem. It came into the collection as part of a large collection of textile fragments from Mildred J. Davis (Mrs. C. Wingfield), of New Bern, North Carolina, in 1997. According to accession records for this donation, the donor indicated that the most of the textile fragments were purchased mostly in New England (specifically New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine) in small, out-of-the-way shops during the mid-twentieth century. Some fragments were bought in England and Scotland. The fragments date from the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century, and are important for their representation of many different kinds of textile techniques. The purchases, which were made by the donor herself, were advised or informed in part by Gertrude Townsend, the first curator of textiles at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as well as "Dos" Cavalo.

The fragment features several embroidery motifs described as Chinoiserie, or the imitation or evocation of Chinese (and, more broadly, "Eastern") motifs and techniques in Western art and material culture, especially in the eighteenth century. On the left side of the fragment, we see a stylized blue flower hovering above a small figure, wearing a feathered hat, standing at what looks to be a spinning wheel. A line of sequins draws our attention to a central motif, which resembles a hanging basket with a plant inside (perhaps a closed tulip). Moving along further to the right, we see another flower, in the same style as the one on the left, but this time it is a yellow color. Beneath the flower is a hummingbird, about the same size as the figure on the left. Beneath these figures is a border composed of a simple reciprocal, linear design. The embroidery and sequins along the hem of a gown, as well as the fragment's remarkably good condition, suggests that the garment was not intended for everyday use.



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Indian  
Title: Textile fragment  
Date Made: 1700-1800  
Type: Textile  
Materials: Textile:  
polychrome silk floss  
embroidery (chain stitch);  
metallic sequins  
Place Made: India  
Credit Line: Gift of Mildred J. Davis

The garment to which this fragment once belonged was likely made between 1790 and 1805, and possibly India, according to Ned Lazaro, Collections Manager and Associate Curator of Textiles at Historic Deerfield. The collections database attributes its country of origin to France or India. The uncertain origins of this fragment and its possible imitation of “Eastern” motifs, like other objects in the collections, create more questions than answers. The fragment occupies an ambiguous space between the East and the West, which encourages us to ask: what cultural, political, and economic contexts created the space for objects like this to be produced, collected by woman in New England, and deposited in the Historic Deerfield collections?

Gown fragment, Historic Deerfield, HD T.093

This fragment features polychrome silk embroidery on a very fine cotton muslin (mull) ground. The embroidery consists of a floral design, with the largest motif as a small bouquet of flowers tied with a bow. Most of the flowers are generic, but the three at the top of the bouquet resemble hyacinths. It is believed to have been part of the hem to a robe, gown, or skirt. It was originally accessioned as a fichu, likely because of its triangular shape ([see this ensemble at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for an example of an 18th century fichu](#)). Rather, it is likely a section of embroidery removed from a gown hem, according to Ned Lazaro, Collections Manager and Associate Curator of Textiles at Historic Deerfield.

It came to Historic Deerfield in 1976 as part of a large donation from Mrs. Fred Thompson (nee Julia Acheson, 1916-2000) of New York City. Julia Acheson was born in Raymond, Washington, the daughter of Barclay and Louise Acheson, and the niece of Lila and DeWitt Wallace who founded Reader's Digest. Her husband, Fred Thompson, had served as vice president of the New York Times. All of the items of clothing and textiles, over 200 of them, that came with the gift had descended in her family, according to the donor. Historic Deerfield was happy to acquire this gift, as the objects increased the museum's holdings in the areas of clothing and textiles.

Much like another fragment in the collections of Historic Deerfield, the garment to which this fragment once belonged was likely made between 1790 and 1805. It was made in India or France ([here is an example of an 18th-century French embroidered skirt](#) – note the bouquets).



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Indian (possibly)  
Title: Fragment  
Date Made: 1790-1805  
Type: Clothing  
Materials: Textile: polychrome silk embroidery (tambour or chain stitch); white plain weave, sheer cotton (mull)  
Credit Line: Gift from Mrs. Fred Thompson (nee Julia Acheson)

Bag (khorjin) face, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum,  
MH 1997.14.145.1

This textile is the front part of a *khorjin* (bag). It was woven for a purely utilitarian purpose – it was designed to help the owner carry things. It is believed to have been woven in the 19th century in Balochistan, an arid desert and mountainous region that stretches across southeastern Iran, southwestern Pakistan, and southwestern Afghanistan. It was given to the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in 1997, as a bequest of Eileen Paradis Barber (Mount Holyoke Class of 1997) after her death the year prior.

In 1936, Mount Holyoke alumna Eileen Paradis married Joseph Barber Jr., an editor at *The Atlantic Monthly*. The Barbers amassed a large collection of silver and modern art. A search query for “Eileen Paradis Barber” in the Collections Database yields 265 records, including art by Käthe Kollwitz, Paul Cooper, and Albrecht Dürer. This *khorjin* is one of two textiles in the entirety of Eileen Paradis Barber’s contributions to the museum’s collection, the other a 19th-century American embroidery sampler. Therefore, these textiles are exceptional in the sense that they do not fit the Barbers’ pattern of collecting. One can only speculate how the *khorjin* came into the Barbers’ possession, but it likely passed through an art auction in the 20th century. In fact, [a similar bag can be found on an online auction](#), which suggests that although the medium has changed, this manner of acquiring, selling, and collecting Middle Eastern products persists in the present day.



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Baluch  
Title: Bag (khorjin) face  
Date Made: 19th century  
Type: Textile  
Materials: Wool warp, weft, and pile;  
asymmetrical knot  
Place Made: Asia; Baluchistan  
(Iran, Pakistan, or Afghanistan)  
Credit Line: Eileen Paradis  
Barber

Rug fragment, Mead Art Museum, AC T.1929.14

Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Bokhara  
Title: Rug weave  
Date Made: 19th century  
Type: Textile  
Materials: woven; wool  
Place Made: Central Asia  
Credit Line: Gift of George D. Pratt





Milas carpet, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, MH 19xx.1.A(e).SV

This carpet, made in Turkey circa 1900, represents a mystery for the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. It has been identified as a Milas carpet, suggesting it bears characteristics similar to other carpets produced in the district of Milas in southwestern Turkey. This is a vibrant wool carpet, with synthetic red, blue, yellow, and green dyes. It features three stacked medallions in the main field, with various geometric patterns along the borders. Its design resembles the earlier large-pattern Holbein carpets of sixteenth-century Anatolia, characterized by large octagonal medallions set within squares.

The Milas carpet is a mystery primarily because no one knows how, or when, it came to the museum. In 1972, art professor Dorothy Cogwell wrote a letter to one Mary Thornton about a number of “Persian” rugs in the collection, which she claimed, “do not belong to [the museum].” The carpet’s accession files contain several appraisals of antiques on the Mount Holyoke campus, ranging from 1933 to 1969. The Milas carpet was likely collected by some faculty member, who left it behind, and it somehow ended up in the museum.



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Turkish  
Title: Milas carpet  
Date Made: 1900  
Type: Textile; Floor covering  
Materials: Wool  
Place Made: Turkey  
Credit Line: n/a

Silk scarf, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, MH 27.O.M.

This silk scarf was given to the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in 1859 as a gift from Reverend Isaac Newton Hurd. Its accession number, 27.O.M., indicates that it was acquired before the museum adopted its current accession number system in 1974. It is believed to be Indian in origin, and given the date of its acquisition, the latest point in time that it could have been made is the early- to mid-nineteenth century. The only additional information about this scarf in the accession files is the phrase, “missionary cabinet,” in its description, and a reference to a catalogue of missionary objects compiled by Louise Randolph (Mount Holyoke College Class of 1872).

The donor, Rev. Hurd, was an alumnus of Auburn Theological Seminary (Class of 1849) and became a pastor at Big Flat, New York, after graduating. Hurd then served as a missionary in Arcot and Chintadrepettah, India, for over seven years. He married Mount Holyoke Seminary alumna Rachel Loretta Cowles (Class of 1859) in 1860. It seems likely that Rev. Hurd purchased the scarf while in India, and upon return to the United States, he gave it to Mount Holyoke in the same year that Rachel Loretta Cowles finished her schooling at the seminary.



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Indian  
Title: Silk scarf  
Date Made: n/a  
Type: Clothing  
Materials: silk  
Place Made: Asia; India  
Credit Line: Gift of Rev. Mr. I.N. Hurd.

Illuminated page, Smith College Museum of Art,  
SC 1990.2-23

This page, and 1990:2-22, appear to have been made as a double frontispiece for a manuscript of Omar Khayyam's scientific treatises; known in the west primarily as a poet, Khayyam (d. 1123), a native of Nishapur, was above all a noted philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer; the central ogival frames and their finials contain information on the manuscript and its author while the border cartouches give a sampling of Khayyam's quatrains; although most of the poetry does not belong to the standard corpus of the poet, one quatrain is among his most famous:

*"I was in the potter's shop last night,  
And saw two thousand jugs, some speaking, some dumb;  
Each was anxiously asking,  
'Where is the potter, and the buyer and seller of pots?'"*  
-Translation from P. Avery & J. Heath-Stubbs, "The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam", Penguin classics, 1981, p. 64

Based on the compositional device of a carpet pattern, the finely illuminated decorative motifs, the expert manner of the writing in cursive hand (in two styles), and the unusual choice of parchment, a material not in use since the 10th century, may indicate that these pages resulted from an expensive experiment.



Maker: Unknown  
Culture: Iranian (Persian); Qajar  
Title: Illuminated Page with the Poetry of Omar Khayyam  
Date Made: 19th century  
Type: Drawing  
Materials: opaque water base colors and gold on parchment  
Place Made: Iran (Persia)  
Credit Line: Gift of Mrs. Evan M. Wilson (Leila Fosburgh, class of 1934)

## Selected Resources

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## About the Curator

This online exhibition was curated by graduate intern Chelsea Miller. Chelsea is pursuing a master's degree in History and a graduate certificate in Public History at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Her fields of study include museum studies, U.S. cultural history, and global history. She is currently the Communications Assistant for the Department of History at UMass Amherst. She will graduate in May 2016.

During the summer of 2015, Chelsea received a graduate fellowship to study at the Institute for Curatorial Practice, where she led a co-curated exhibition of art in the Five College Museums collections, titled *BODY [IN/AS] LANDSCAPE*. Chelsea remained at the Institute as an intern for the 2015-16 academic year to develop this exhibition. The Third Space: Textiles in Material and Visual Culture has several functions: it is a cross-cultural and cross-institutional exhibition of textile arts, it is an experiment in the digital exhibition of objects that are difficult to display in physical exhibition spaces, and it is an educational resource for students interested in material culture, global history, and curatorial practice.

[about.me/chelseamiller](http://about.me/chelseamiller)

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## The Institute for Curatorial Practice

At the Institute for Curatorial Practice, students investigate and implement contemporary modes of curation, combining new media technologies and experimental methods with the direct study of collections in distinguished museums and archives in the Five Colleges (Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts Amherst). The institute offers an intensive summer program, as well as paid undergraduate internships, graduate fellowships, and year-round advising for student research and practice in curating.



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