WECS
Wardrobe

Spring issue 2021

£7.50: Free to members

wecs
west of england
costume society

www.
wofecostumesociety.org

Black and white issue

Calendar

Followers of Shoe Fashion

Saturday 15 May 2021

■ Zoom

Janet Arnold Study Day
The Politics of Fashion from Cromwell to Thatcher

Saturday 2 October 2021

■ Widcombe Social Club, Bath BA2 6AA

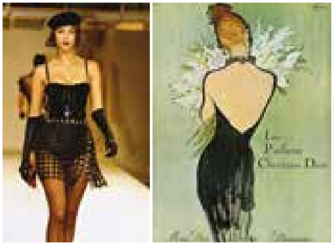
Christmas meeting
The House of Embroidered Paper

Saturday 20 November 2021

■ Bath and County Club, Queens Parade, Bath, BA1 2NJ

Main image and background

Swinging in Quant
OpArt Page 8



So simple, so chic
The LBD Page 12

Buckling down!
C18th shoes Page 10

Doing a runner
Danish Whitework Page 21

Feeling fruity
Mango dressing Page26

Welcome to the bumper Spring edition of *Wardrobe.* There's no denying that it has been a busy 'virtual' winter for the Committee, but we hope to meet up properly again in October.

We received only 27 replies to our AGM communications, but all of them supported our proposals, including our updated Constitution. Your seven-strong Committee remains unchanged, except that Helen Montague-Smith is now a full Committee member. During 2020 we had 133 members, and ended the year with £7,345 in the bank.

Having said this, however, so far this year we have lost several members, and so we must look to everyone involved with WECS to tell their friends about us, attract new members, and become more involved with arranging events and outings. If you, or anyone you know, are interested in helping us, particularly with social media, do get in touch with me via chair@wofecostumesociety.org

Our webmaster Tony Cooper has been busy updating the WECS website, which we look forward to seeing in the spring. We are also looking at supporting museums and individuals with small grants to assist them with conservation projects and training. We will update you as we progress.

In the meantime we look forward to our next Zoom event on May 15th with Rebecca Shawcross of the Northampton Shoe Museum, and I hope you enjoy this edition of *Wardrobe*.

With every good wish to you all from us all on your Committee.

Angela Bailey
Chair

Meetings for 2021

Followers of Shoe Fashion

Christian Dior shoes

Saturday 15 May 2021

14.30 start

■ **Zoom talk**

Speaker: Rebecca Shawcross, Senior Shoe Curator at Northampton Museum.

The talk will highlight some of the highs and lows of shoe fashions, from the distinctly lewd medieval poulaine, the delicate flats of the early nineteenth century and the 70s platform.
Book online or with booking secretary: bookings@wofecostumesociety.org.
Free for members, non-members £5.00.

Janet Arnold Study Day
The Politics of Fashion: from Cromwell to Thatcher

Saturday 2 October 2021

10.00 - 16.00

■ **Widcombe Social Club, Bath BA2 6AA**

Postponed from last October.
Three confirmed speakers for the day are -
Pat Poppy on Roundheads and Cavaliers;
Jonathan Faiers on tartan and Scottish politics in the C18 and C19 Viktoria Ivleva on Catherine II and the clothing she wore on the day of the coup.
We are hoping that Daniel Conway will be available to speak about the choice of dress and fashion of women in British public life.
Booking form in the Summer edition of *Wardrobe*.
Please note the change of date.

Christmas meeting
The House of Embroidered Paper

Saturday 20 November 2021 14.15

■ **Bath and County Club, Queens Parade (off Queen Square) Bath BA1 2NJ**

Speaker: Stephanie Smart
Stephanie, who established *The House of Embroidered Paper* in 2017 will tell us about creating garments in paper textiles for use in exhibitions.
Booking form in the Summer edition of *Wardrobe*.
See *Out & About*, (page three) for exhibition information.

not

Out & About

The Fan Museum

■ Online

There is an online exhibition through The Fan Museum by Google Arts and Culture showing a vast array of fans. It is well worth a look!
https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-fan-museum
The Fan Museum holds a world-renowned collection of fans and fan leaves which include the splendid Hélène Alexander Collection and further acquisitions, gifts and bequests which have been received since the museum opened to the public over twenty years ago.
The collection is comprehensive, with examples from all over the world from the 12th century to the present day. The collection is particularly strong in 18th and 19th century European fans.

V&A

■ V&A, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL

vam.ac.uk

Tracey Emin for Longchamp, International Woman suitcase, 2004. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. DACS

Bags: Inside Out

until 12 September 2021

From rucksacks to dispatch boxes, Birkin bags to Louis Vuitton luggage, *Bags: Inside Out* explores the style, function, design and craftsmanship of the ultimate accessory.

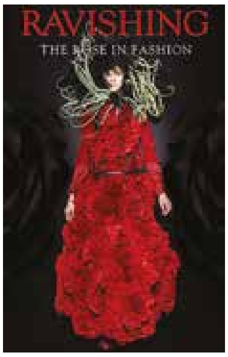
Totnes Fashion and Textiles museum

Home of the Devonshire Collection of Period Costume
■ 43 High Street Totnes Devon TQ9 5NP.
tel: 01803 862857
www.totftm.org
The Museum should be able to open its 2021 exhibition in mid-June and it is planned to continue to the end of August. The theme of the exhibition will be *Into the Blue*, featuring original costumes from the 1700s to the 1900s.
Please check this website regularly for the latest news.
You can still view the virtual version of our 2020 exhibition, *The Survival of Glamour: 1935—1955*.

Ravishing:

The Rose in Fashion

Friday 30 April 2021
15.00-17.00
■ Online YouTube Premieres
Go to www.fitnyc.edu and register.

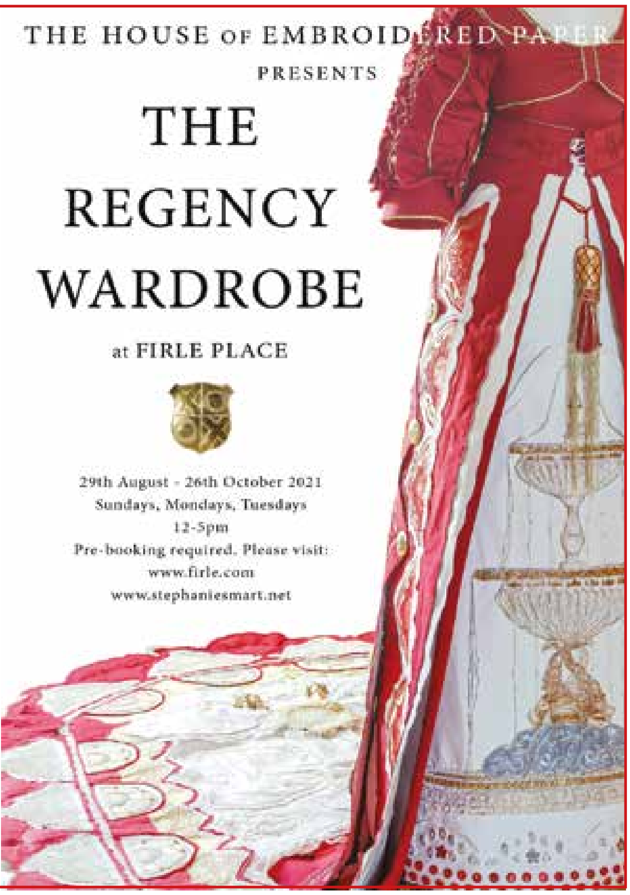


Noir Kei Ninomiya, ensemble, red wool, resin-treated faux fur, nylon, spring 2020. Photograph © Noir Kei Ninomiya, photograph courtesy Comme des Garçons.

This virtual event will be The Museum at FIT's 24th academic symposium. *Ravishing: The Rose in Fashion* explores how the beauty, mythology, and symbolism of the rose have long influenced fashionable dress.
Rose: it's a flower, a colour, and a scent. It's in fairy tales and design. This flower has become integral to art and culture.

Speakers include Amy de la Haye, professor at London College of Fashion and co-curator of the exhibition; Jonathan Faiers, professor of Fashion Thinking at Winchester School of Art; Colleen Hill, curator at MFIT and cocurator of the exhibition; Mairi MacKenzie, research fellow at Glasgow School of Art; and Elizabeth Way, assistant curator at MFIT.

The *House of Embroidered Paper* is delighted to be able to announce that *The Regency Wardrobe* will be shown at Firle Place, Firle, East Sussex in 2021 - dates are subject to change according to Covid-19 restrictions. Please check back or visit firle.com
Parts of the collection will then be shown at Chertsey museum and at Worthing from October 2021 - dates tbc
Only after the collection has been exhibited at Firle Place will every piece be visible on this site, in the meantime additional works and aspects of the exhibition are being added, the background inspiration behind each piece is being detailed and virtual versions of each exhibit are being created.
Please enter the main site and click 'Research & Production' and the social media links to see more.



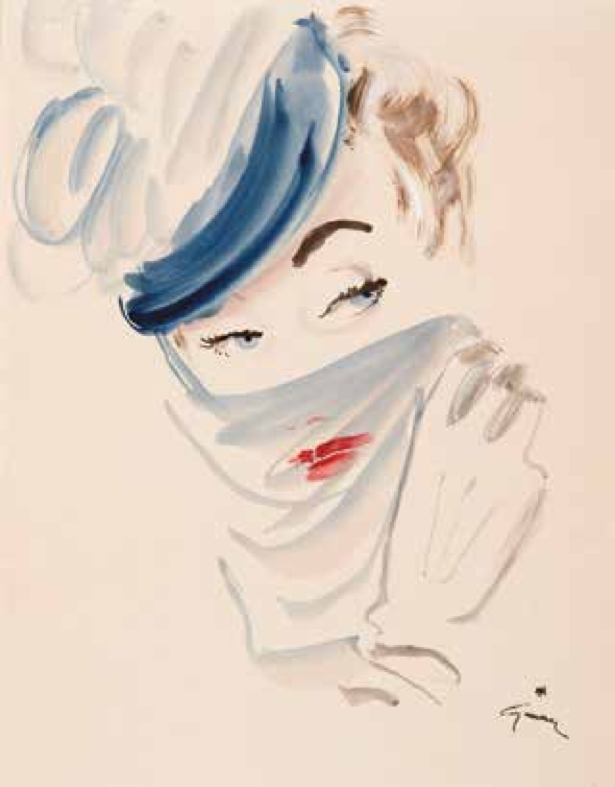
THE HOUSE OF EMBROIDERED PAPER
PRESENTS
THE
REGENCY
WARDROBE
at FIRLE PLACE

29th August - 26th October 2021
Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays
12-5pm
Pre-booking required. Please visit:
www.firle.com
www.stephaniesmart.net

Out and About comes with all the current caveats about masks, checking first and booking at the various venues and events.

20th Century Fashion - A Genre Rediscovered

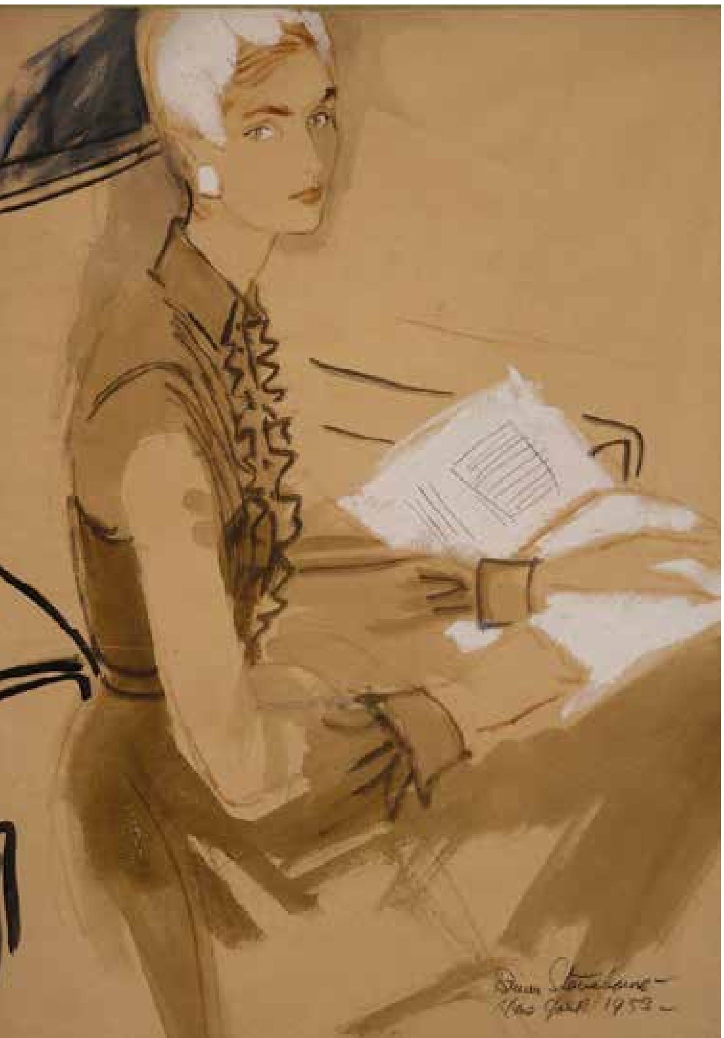
Speaker Connie Gray, of Gray M.C.A.
Report by Angela Bailey



For our first Zoom event, Connie Gray introduced us to the world of fashion illustration between the 1920s and 1980s. The artists who produced images for magazines such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* worked at short notice, and were regarded as producing commercial rather than fine art. Once printed or published, originals seem to have been of little interest to those involved, and were frequently thrown away. However, a number have survived, and those, as well as the printed versions, continue to fire our imaginations with how it must have felt to wear the clothes and to be part of the lifestyle that they portray. These are not pattern designs: they are works of art.

It takes Connie anything up to two years to assemble enough items for an exhibition; they are found under beds, at obscure auctions, in boxes and on walls in private homes.

She began by showing us twelve magazine covers from the 'golden age' of illustration (1920s to 1960s), her favourite period being the 1940s-50s. Conde Nast had taken over *Vogue* in 1909: young gifted artists were given the opportunity to prove themselves. The stylised block-like colour and texture of the Erte period was replaced by their images, which reflected developments in fine art, theatre and of course, the social life of the (very) rich.



The three best known of this group were Carl 'Eric' Erickson, *Vogue*'s great star of the era; René Bouët-Willaumez; and René Bouché.

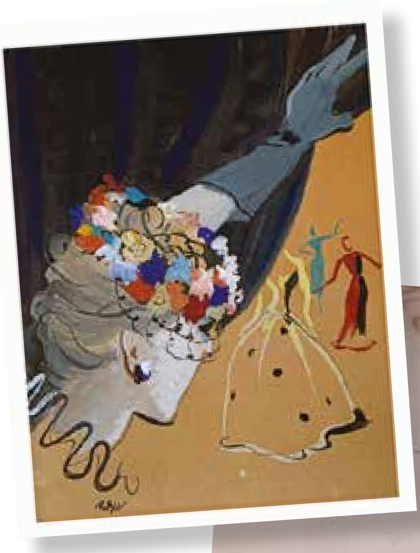
Carl 'Eric' Erickson 'Eric', a graduate of the Chicago Fine Arts School, placed his models in context *(opposite page, top right)* and was a favourite with advertisers and with *Vogue* (where his first illustrations appeared in 1916). After joining the staff of *Vogue* in the 1920s his drawings and watercolours reflected the milieux of the smartest people, with his free and flowing style, which was different to the more angular and graphic images of his predecessors. Having settled in France in the 1930s with his artist wife Lee Creelman (they left in the spring of 1940 as the German army advanced) they spent the war years in the US, returning after the Armistice to resume his coverage of the 'high life' in the 1950s including the events surrounding the Coronation. He died in 1958.

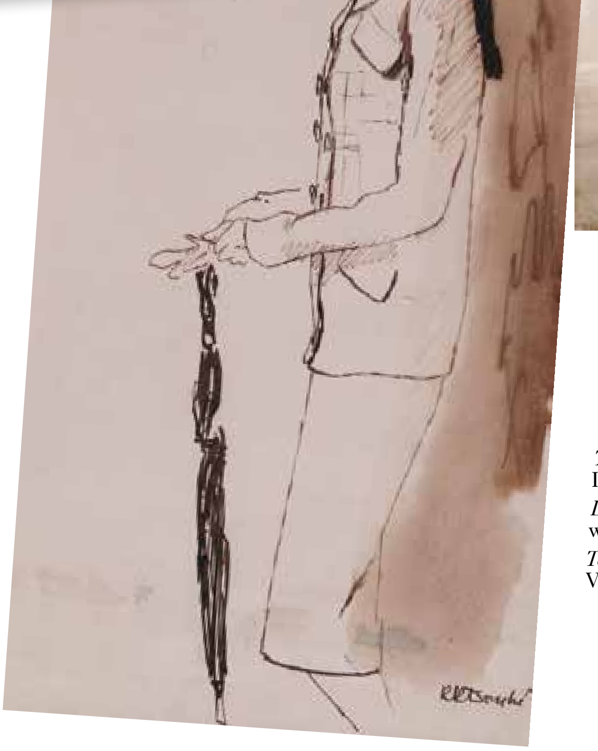
Eric's contemporary and rival, **René Bouët-Willaumez** (RBW) was also an artist first and fashion illustrator second. Along with Connie's next 'great', René Bouché, he had worked at a magazine called the *Gazette du Bon Ton*, which was acquired by *Vogue* during WW1. A French count from Brittany, he studied engineering before joining *Vogue* in 1929. His style, *(opposite page, top left)* like Eric's, was more painterly than graphic, indeed, was initially rather similar to Eric's but developed later into his own dramatic presentation of the latest fashions. By the mid-thirties both were taking advantage of the colour reproductions now available to magazine editors. RBW's use of ink and water colour was so popular that apparently the 'ladies who lunched' in New York would accidentally on purpose walk past the *Vogue* building in the hope of being sketched by him.

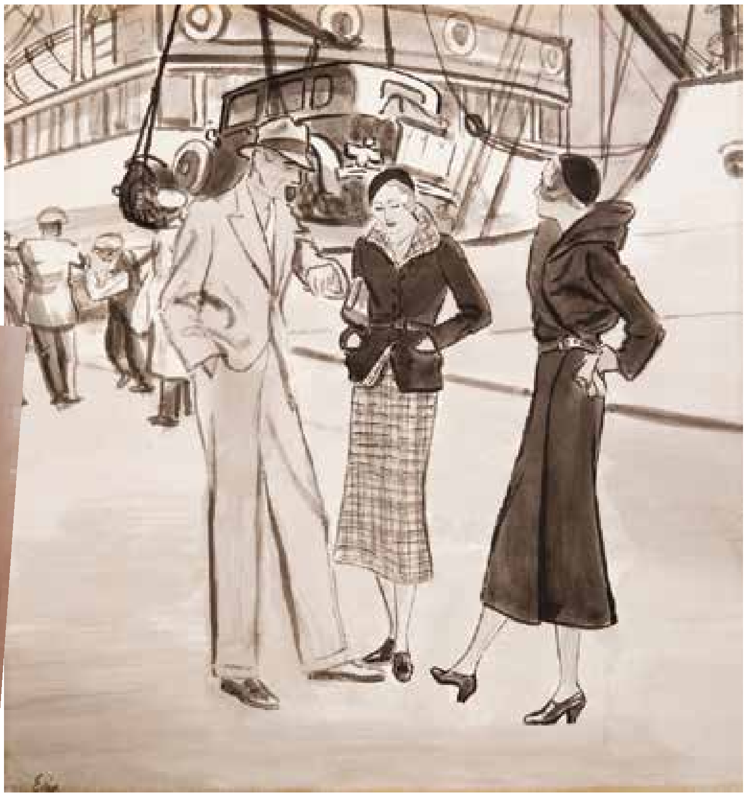
Connie's number three, **René Bouché** (1905-1963) had no formal training, and was already in his mid thirties when taken on by *Vogue* in 1941 after cheekily persuading the editor to give him six weeks to learn how to draw. His work *(opposite page, centre)* has been found in strange places, including a cupboard belonging to the daughter of a former chairman of Saks Fifth Avenue. He undertook advertising work for Saks and Elizabeth Arden, and in 1962 decorated the restaurants at the New York Hilton hotel restaurant. Connie showed us a stunning *Vogue* cover featuring an Austin Healey sports car. Bouche's portraits included Sophia Loren and Jackie Kennedy.

We then moved on to meet recent artists:

Lorena Alippe (1930-) spent her career as a fashion illustrator in New York having trained at Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts in the 1940s. Her introduction to the established fashion illustrator Tod Draz (and his subsequent







Opposite page

Top: René Gruau (1909-2004) Hat and Veil, c1948. Watercolour on paper. Signed. Provence/The Estate of René Gruau. 32x25cm

Bottom left: Brian Stonehouse (1918-1998) New York, ink and wash on paper. Signed 54x38cm

This page

Top left: René Bouët-Willaumez (1900-1979) American Vogue front cover 1937. Ink and gouache on paper. Signed. Published March 1937. 38x28cm

Left: René Bouché (1905-1963) Model with hat, scarf and umbrella. Ink and wash on paper. Signed 40x22cm

Top right: Carl 'Eric' Erickson (1891-1958) Awaiting to Embark for American Vogue 1930s. Ink and wash on paper. Signed 35.5x34cm.

approval of her work) allowed her the confidence to pursue her dream. Her quick elegant style was easily recognisable in newspapers across America and was beautifully adapted to illustrate each season's collections including those of Christian Dior, Schiaparelli, Oleg Cassini, Arnold Scassi and Seymour Fox. She either worked from the studio with a house model or at the couture showrooms where she would be sent in an atmosphere of secrecy to sketch the collections prior to their launch at the beginning of each new season.

Brian Stonehouse MBE (1918-98) trained at Ipswich Art School but during WW2 had been captured as a secret agent in France. He sketched his way out of a punishing work schedule (and worse) in the concentration camp. After the war he returned to *Vogue*, *Harpers* and *Elizabeth Arden (opposite page, bottom left).* As photography replaced illustration, Stonehouse settled in England and concentrated on portraiture and landscapes.

Connie then showed us THE big postwar name, **René Gruau** (1909-2004) whose father was also a Count, whose work attracts the highest prices. This Italian master worked for *Vogue, Harpers* and *Flair*, becoming Dior's creative director for the 'New Look' in 1947. His bold posters, including for 'La Dolce Vita' (1959) and advertisements all show his trademark G *(opposite page, top right)* with a star brush mark above.

Moving on to the 1970s Connie showed us work by **Angela Landells** and the Puerto Rican-born **Antonio Lopez**, who was the last artist to feature in *Vogue* with any regularity. His work reflected the times in that it concentrated more on ready-to-wear and featured the 'glamazons' of the era, including Jerry Hall and Paloma Picasso.

Connie's final trio were **Kenneth Paul Block, Bill Donovan**, who with his unusual ink and water colour technique is artist in residence at Christian Dior, and lastly **Gladys Perint-Palmer** whose first *Vogue* cover was printed in 1962 and is still working today.

Further reading:

Fashion Drawings in Vogue, William Packer
100 Years of Fashion Illustration, Carrie Blackman

Connie also took the opportunity to invite members to visit the Gray Gallery on Margaret's Buildings in Bath to look at their extensive collection of books and catalogues.

This was our first Zoom meeting, which was a huge learning curve for all involved. Many thanks are due to Connie for her adaptation of her talk for Zoom, and to Theo Gray, who very kindly hosted the technology needed to make sure that everyone was able to take part. Thank you also to Vibeke Ormerod for running a session for members on how to use Zoom.

Realising a design

Speaker, Joe Knapper.

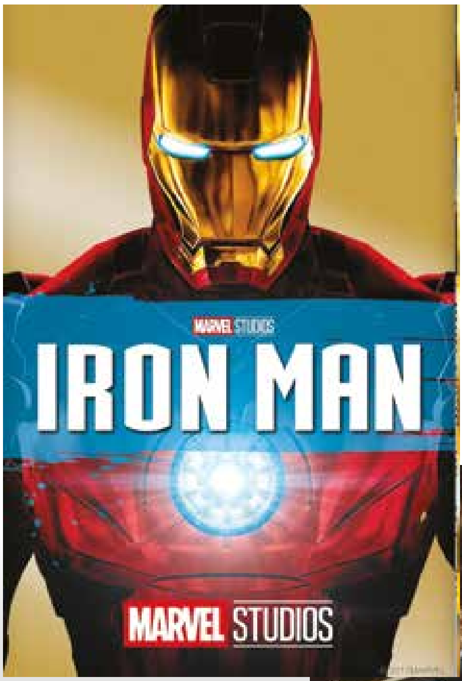
Report by Vibeke Ormerod

At the AGM on 13/2/21 we were lucky enough to have Joe Knapper give a talk about the exciting and creative world of sci-fi and space costumes. Joe works for FXBX Films which is a leading supplier of Special Effects Costume and famous for its many sci-fi and realistic effects for the film industry in particular.

For more than a quarter of a century FXBX have made thousands of costumes for Film, TV and theatre productions using special FX manufacturing techniques, materials and technologies.

To name but a few, *Harry Potter, Artemis Fowl, Raised by Wolves, Game of Thrones, War Horse, Pirates of the Caribbean.....*

Joe was understandably very careful not to infringe copyright on any of the images he used in his presentation, so we have borrowed these *Marvel* publicity shots from other sources to illustrate what he was talking about.



Joe Knapper has been working for FXBX for quite a few years. He did a university degree before starting there but told us that it is not an easy place to get a job but a few are lucky enough to get in and learn on the job, others get in through family or friend relationships and sometimes employees are second or third generation.

To produce these often out-of-this-world costumes the company has specialised workshops for 3D scanning, 3D printing, robotic CNC milling, metalworking, sculpting, sewing, CAD/CAM design and electronics and a multi talented team.

They can offer original or creative solutions from a client's own or from an agreed reference.

No project is too small or large, it can be anything from a simple button to a spacesuit or superhero costume (the most difficult to make) with electronics, lighting and even moving parts incorporated.

Joe explained how they go about starting a project.

STAGE 1 The Brief

The company has a reference or concept design, sometimes a very detailed and specific brief, and it often starts with a mood board.

When Disney gives a brief then that's exactly how it has to look though the choice of material can often be up to FXBX.

A lot of the briefs are confidential and the company has to sign an NDA.

When client requests are for astronaut or space suit design, Photoshop will be used. Sometimes they use clay like in the making of a 3D space helmet (realistic NASA). When it is a choice between the 3D printer and clay Joe says that the 3D

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COSTUME
FBFX
DIGITAL

4am in Jordan for the remake of *Dune*. Joe said that the part of the whole thing which looks glamorous to outsiders was often the most nerve-racking. On location with a costume first-aid kit waiting to be called at short notice to put something right before the light goes - and hoping you're not needed!

printer is becoming a bigger and bigger part of the costume making but it is just a tool. For making a whole suit of armour sculpting works really well and it can be a fantasy armour or historically correct, heavy weight protection or lightweight for ballet or opera. When making armour they have to take into account that the "suit" can be very restricting for the actor so it has to be wide over the chest.

STAGE 2 Scanning

The lead time is often about twelve weeks: photogrammetry* to scan the actor for a costume and after that milling to make a lifesized 3D actor mannequin which will then be covered either with clay or fabric, according to the design brief. In the past live casting was used but it is very time consuming and not very pleasant for the model. And at this moment in time with the pandemic preventing people from meeting, the scan can take place anywhere and be sent to Joe who can progress it to the milling.

In the last few years 3D scanning has also been used for capturing trainers and sportswear for Nike, Puma and Asics amongst others.

STAGE 3 CNC Milling

If talking about producing the space helmet (*The Martian* 2015, *Prometheus* 2012) the form will be finished in 1:1 scale and clay will be laid on the mannequin till the exact form has been sculpted.

For a life size mannequin the robot can mill in various materials from polystyrene to polyurethane boards. The CNC machine is cheaper to use than 3D printing and can deal with larger objects at less cost.

Once a body form has been milled out from the scan it can be digitised again and changed digitally. Some work is purely digital and does not result in creating a real object. Fabric or textile objects are also created as cloaks or tactical armours for testing. Or they might be digital clothing only where a computer graphics approach called PBR (physically based rendering) is used to deliver very realistic looking cloth or costumes, properly "cut" by traditional pattern cutting specialists. This delivers quick, iterate designs and patterns before moving into real-world production.

STAGE 4 R&D, Research and Development

This is where they try to get the whole thing to come together and great attention to detail is necessary. Innovation is called for and often extra work is put in to try to sell a costume. They may work it up in leather or similar or add an arm to a space suit for testing movements on the actor.

STAGE 5 Fittings

These are necessary but very annoying, according to Joe, and the team in the workshop do their best to avoid last minute pitfalls and often try on the costumes themselves to check that basic movements work.

STAGE 6 Moulding and casting

This is for armours and space suits, not fabric suits.

Injection moulds and casting moulds are used in the reproduction area.

STAGE 7 More than one

Multiples will be made. More than one is usually necessary, especially if there is talk of a "super suit" used in a whole film and multiple versions if there is the need for stunt suits.

STAGE 8 Finishing

This is the art finishing stage which might involve simply painting the object if it's plastic or similar but a technique similar to screen printing is also used. FXBX are experts in digital clothing replication.

STAGE 9 Construction and Fabrication

The stage where parts are painted and FINISHED!

STAGE 10 On set, STAND BY

After the very interesting talk Joe was asked about the possibilities of recycling as many of the models will have been produced in fibre. Anything that can be recycled is, like paper and fabric but plastics sometimes not, they often go to costume hire. Roman warrior costumes and 3D armour models are often kept for reuse. Joe said the film industry is aware of environmental issues and the attitude in LA is for saving the planet.

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*Photogrammetry is the science and technology of obtaining reliable information about physical objects and the environment through the process of recording, measuring and interpreting photographic images and patterns of electromagnetic radiant imagery and other phenomena. Or 3D scanning for short.

With thanks to Ben Johns for facilitating the Zoom setup.

benjonhns.co.uk

BEN JOHNS
WEB DESIGN

Art in fashion: Op Art, a partly personal hop and skip through the 60s chequerboard of black and white fashion.

Vibeke Ormerod

No wonder Bridget Riley was annoyed at seeing dresses displayed in every shop window, her graphic designs reproduced *en masse* to be bought by sartorially savvy youngsters who for the greater part had no idea who the artist was behind the new and striking designs, his/her intentions, nor of the origins of the style. Speaking for myself and my friends (aged 14 in 1966), we didn't know, we had enough to do hanging on to the roller coaster ride of rapid change that took place in this defining decade led by art, architecture and music.

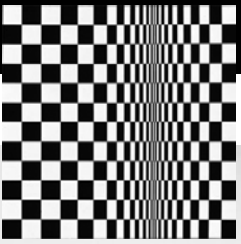
There was breakdown of social restraints, demands for equal pay, women's lib, contraceptive pills, technological advances not to mention the first man landing on the moon. So the purpose of the Op art paintings was to some extent lost if only seen as mass produced images on clothing.

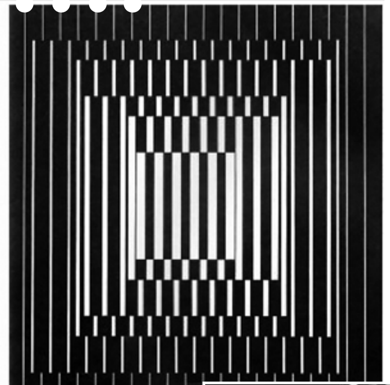
The mid 1960s fashion that I experienced in a small town in Denmark was not very different from that in London. We didn't wear school uniforms so there was plenty of scope to show one's individuality through dress at school as well as outside and we worked hard to achieve "the look".

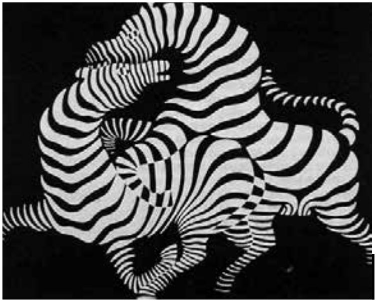
Fashion followed art and had an iconic moment when, in 1965, Yves Saint Laurent designed a shift dress inspired by Piet Mondrian. It was featured on the front cover of French Vogue, whereupon cheaper copies of the dress soon appeared. In spring 1966 three of us girls were proudly wearing a "Mondrian dress". The shift dress lent itself perfectly to the geometric designs in its simple, short, above-the-knee form as it had no shaping apart from bust darts and the skirt was cut straight or with a narrow A-line. It came with or without sleeves and had no waist definition. Nothing new there; Coco Chanel created loose, corsetless dresses in the 1920s.

Mary Quant started manufacturing this easy to wear dress, ideal for street wear, it was the perfect canvas for perambulating Op Art paintings. The shift dress reached all levels of society, teenagers and couture clients alike (designs by Givenchy and Balenciaga), it suited any age and purse. My mum was nifty with a needle and helped me make a sleeveless Op Art dress when I was fifteen.

The mini skirt was made popular by Mary Quant, others had tried without success

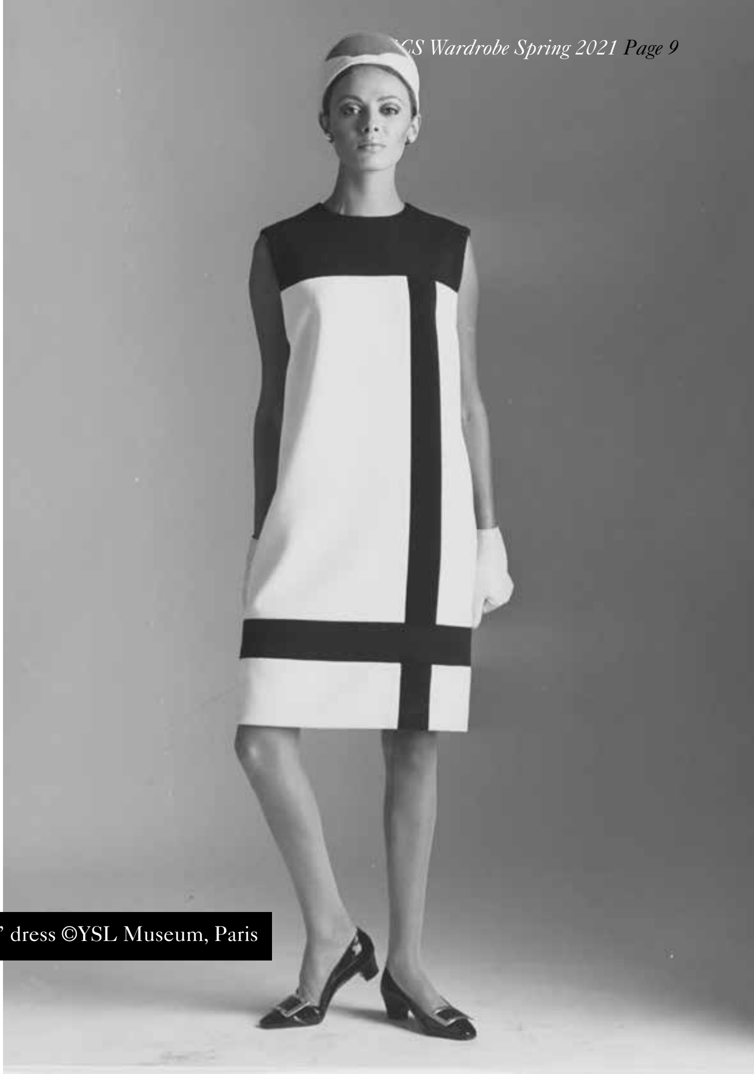






This page, left to right:
Bridget Riley's *Movement in Square* 1961 from *The Responsive Eye*
Victor Vasarely
Bridget Riley
Victor Vasarely's *Bora III*, 1964 *The Responsive Eye*
Zebra Victor Vasarely 1937

Main image: Mary Quant models in shift dresses and go-go boots



The famous 'Mondrian' dress ©YSL Museum, Paris

before her, but she introduced tights which could be made in the same colours as the skirts, which meant we could wear short and still be decent. We happily embraced this, glad to get rid of stockings and faced the world feeling very grown up in black and white shift dresses, hot pants, mini skirts, white or black vinyl knee high boots (ugh!) and fabric flying helmets like Snoopy as the Red Baron, possibly a reference to NASA's pioneering space work. Op Art sunglasses, earrings, belts and other accessories were readily available. Twiggy was our favourite model, we all aspired to look like her but never managed to get thin enough. We were riding high on this black and white wave of optimism and change and with The Beatles ringing in our ears we walked carefree into Sixth form in 1968.

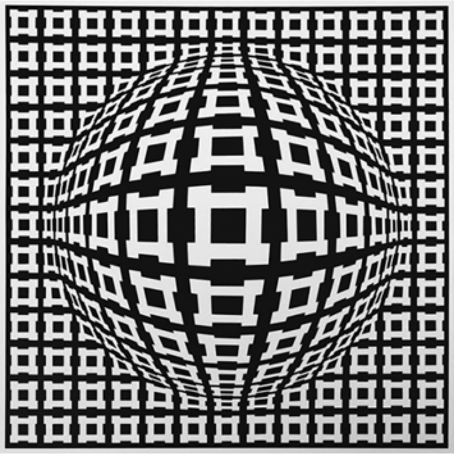
So what is Op Art? Although the term itself wasn't coined until 1964, the origins of the optical art movement started in the late 1940s with a group of artists who were interested in investigating visual perception. They used optical illusion, typically employing geometric patterns, mostly in black and white for maximum contrast to confuse, excite or fool the eye. The visual tension created gave a sense of illusion, movement or warping within the work. The style was launched in 1955 with *Le Mouvement*, a group exhibition, which gained an international following.

However, it was exactly ten years later that the 1965 exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York turned Op Art global and created a demand for such designs in fashion, interior decoration and the media. Textile companies Heal's, Hull Traders and Edinburgh Weavers in the U.K. led the way in printing Op Art furnishing fabrics.

Two of the most recognisable artists of the movement were Victor Vasarely and Bridget Riley, both of whom were represented in the exhibition but had diametrically opposed views about the phenomenon. Riley was dismayed at seeing her original work "vulgarised" for commercial use, publicly expressing her anger at having her art reproduced for the mass market. Conversely, Vasarely thought that art should be for everyone and collaborated with the Rosenthal porcelain company and textile firms such as Edinburgh Weavers to create suitable designs.

Viktor Vasarely is widely regarded as the father of Op Art providing some of the most distinctive images and optical effects in 20th-century art. In his paintings he created illusory effects of depth, perspective and motion. He focused on the act of looking and distinguishing between what we can see and what is really there. He was born in Hungary in 1906, became a graphic designer, was inspired by the Bauhaus movement and Cezanne, who "while respecting nature, gradually transformed it into geometric reality". He moved to Paris in 1930, painted "Zebra", one of his early graphic works, in 1937 and his optical art work really took off in the late 40s. He spent his summers in Provence and developed what he hoped would become a new universal language for art and architectural design to benefit society, combining technical precision with a scientific awareness. He died at the age of 90 in Paris.

Bridget Riley worked on relationships between figure and ground to present the viewer with dynamic sensations, stimulating their imagination through the tension and optical illusion in the painting. She was born in 1931 in London (and at time of writing is still alive) but spent some of her childhood in Cornwall and she credits the Cornish beach for inspiring her to see in a way that led to her later style of painting. She studied at the Royal College of Art and in 1960 she evolved a style exploiting optical illusion to make the two-dimensional surface of the painting seem to move, vibrate, and flicker. Her paintings inspired textile designs but her objectives have always been to investigate what and how we see and to provoke both uncertainty and clarity.



She viewed her art as a social act where the viewer completes the experience of the painting. This belief in an interactive art led her to resist the commercialisation of her work.

In 1979 I visited Gordes, one of the famous hilltop villages in the Luberon in Provence and I went to the exhibition of Vasarely's 500 paintings in Gordes chateau, a renaissance palace.

Vasarely's journey into optical or kinetic art had really taken off after WWII and having settled in Provence he rented the chateau in Gordes for £1 and did it up at his own cost and made it into a museum in 1970. Looking back at my visit to the museum I realise that viewer participation in front of the original work of art itself and seeing a printed shift dress in the street are two very different things and I can sympathise with Bridget Riley.

After Op Art's unprecedented commercial success in the mid 60s it soon went into decline. By the late 60s it had fallen out of favour and psychedelic, colourful prints started appearing on clothes as the hippie movement gathered pace.

So, was that it? No, not at all. The striking style of Op Art sets it apart from other clothing and still influences designers. Op Art, it seems, is a survivor and a recurring theme in the fashion industry; for example:

1980s Istante,

1990s Moschino

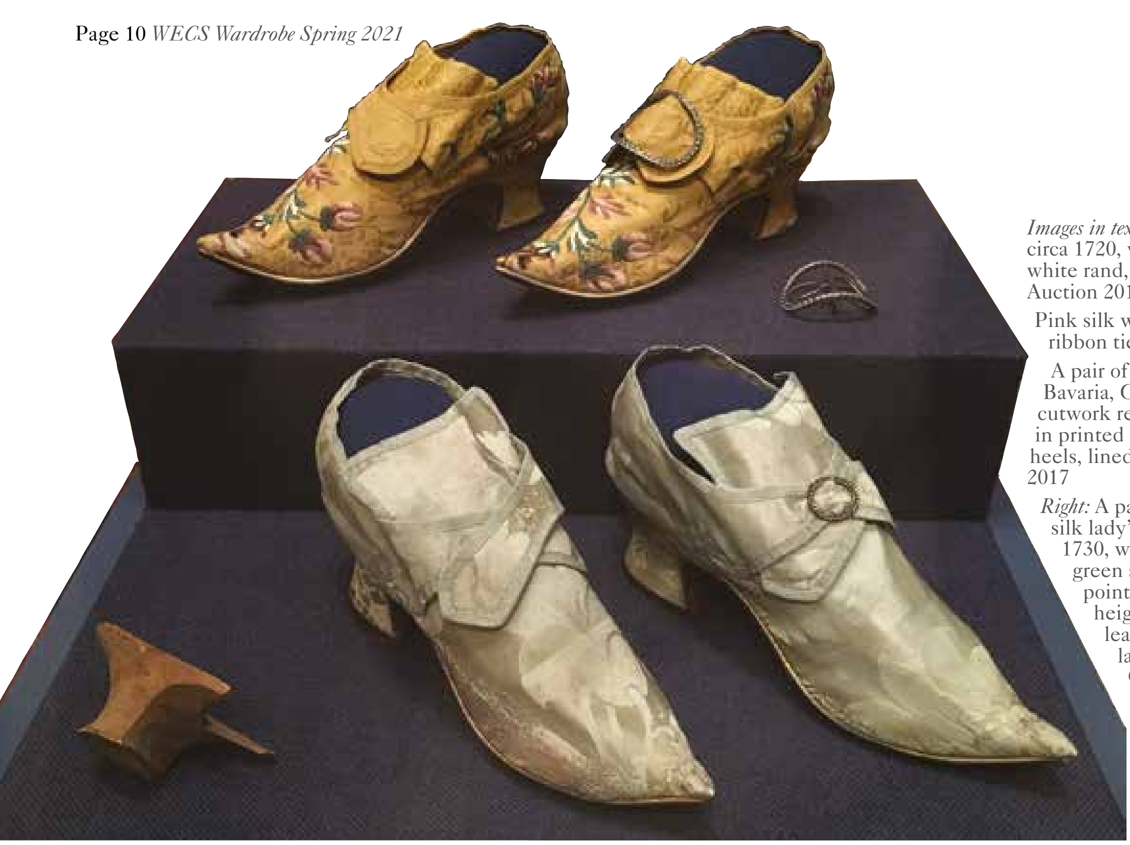
1995 Jean Paul Gautier

2009 Alexander McQueen

2013 Marc Jacobs

2013 Louis Vuitton (which was quickly copied by Zara).

Both Vasarely and Bridget Riley have had several exhibitions since their initial success, Riley as late as 2017 and Vasarely posthumously in 2019 in Paris and their work is proudly hung in many museums all over the world.



Images in text: A pair of green silk ladies shoes, circa 1720, with curved toes, red leather heels, white rand, edged in green ribbon. © Kerry Taylor Auction 2017

Pink silk with metal braid centre front rising to ribbon ties *Photo:* Alison Fairhurst

A pair of green satin and pink silk ladies shoes, Bavaria, Germany, circa 1780, the uppers with cutwork revealing pink failled 'butterflies' edged in printed pink ruffled silk ribbon, white leather heels, lined in white kid. © Kerry Taylor Auction 2017

Right: A pair of brocaded silk lady's shoes circa 1730, woven in pink and green silk with curved, pointed toes, medium height heels, white leather rand, the latchets held in place by paste buckles. © Kerry Taylor Auction 2017

Main image, left: C18th shoes in the collection of Williamsburg Museum, shown unfastened and buckled. The wooden heel survives after the fabric is long gone. *Williamsburg photos both pages:* Fiona Starkey

Shoes and Shopping in the C18th.

Saturday 20 March 2021
Speaker Alison Fairhurst.
Report by Helen Montague-Smith

Alison Fairhurst discovered her fascination with C18 shoes when she examined over 120 pairs for her PhD. She later surveyed over 1000 shoes either from fashion plates or written and printed sources and all this information formed the basis of a most delightful talk. We were treated to the most wonderful series of colourful slides – all on zoom of course – but a fascinating way to spend an afternoon.

Alison began by reminding us that most museum collections represent the best of anything which has been kept. This is particularly so where everyday shoes would have worn out and been discarded or replaced. Evidence of shoemakers and their environment again may not be representative of the century as a whole but certainly give a good idea of how the better off were shod and how they obtained their footwear. A question at the end of the talk about the wearing of boots gave the speaker an opportunity to say that women did not wear boots during the C18, they were for men.

Shoe styles changed very little during this time although the start of fashion magazines towards the end of the previous century did start to encourage changes in styles. Women's shoes at the start of the century had heels, upturned pointed toes and latchets to secure the heel. Left and right shoes were made on the same last. A white edging, called a rand (a welt) was a distinctive feature of the time which was used to join the sole to the upper. The latchets were fastened across the instep using ribbon ties. Buckles were only used earlier on men's shoes which tended to have squared off toes.

Shoe profiles altered only slightly but different materials began to be used. Fabrics for uppers included silks, brocades and by the 1720s damasks. Leather began to feature for outdoor shoes. The white rand continued to be in fashion and a narrow braid was added for decoration. Louis heels, eight centimetres high, were introduced – these were made of wood and then covered in the same fabric as the shoe. Tongues reached higher up the foot and latchets became larger. The latter still had punched holes for ribbon ties. A central wide braid, or 'lacing' was used to decorate the front of the shoe and this could be in metal lacework.

There seemed to be a limited colour palette – mostly greens and creams.

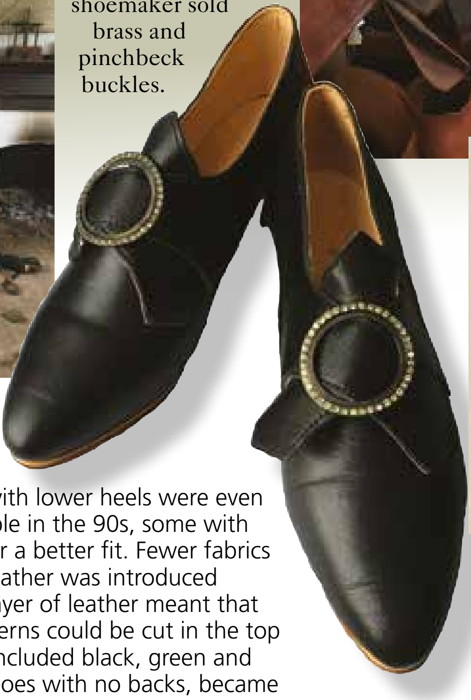
By the 1730s little had changed but colours were still green and cream with the addition of blues. Heels were a little higher and one example had the heel so far under the instep that walking must have been difficult. Looking at the 1732 painting of *The Rake's Progress* by Hogarth, it could be seen that the shoes had lace decoration and ribbon ties.

During the following decade styles and shapes changed very little. Toes became a little more rounded and had no upturn. The white rand was rarely used, being replaced by a brown leather welt which was concealed by fabric and the Louis heel became more shaped and slightly lower – five to seven centimetres. Buckles were beginning to be used to fasten latchets following the introduction of pinchbeck, a form of brass, in 1733 and Sheffield Plate in 1742. The same fabrics were in use and colours included cream, yellow and red.

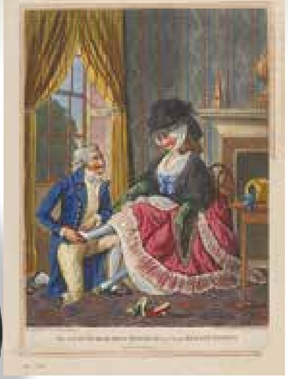
By the 1750s toes had become more rounded and buckles were smaller. Pompadour heels were higher and narrower which was showy but not practical. Bindings were self colour and a wider range of colours was available – cream, green, blue and red. By the next decade, buckles had become larger

Small town shoemaker's shop in C18th Williamsburg, Virginia.

Customers tempted in by the wares in the window are met by the shoemaker's wife. When not dealing with customers, she is expected to continue working at the back of the single room. The Shoemaker himself is either not so good with people or his time is too valuable and he continues finishing off the soles on a pair of stout working shoes.

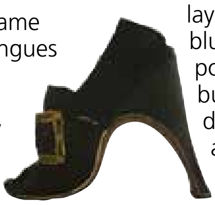


Diamanté buckles for these reproduction shoes were sold separately, in a more upmarket shop. This shoemaker sold brass and pinchbeck buckles.



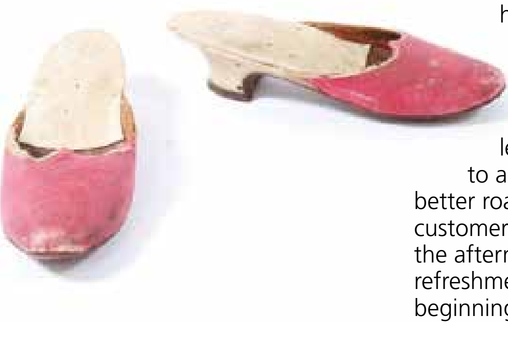
"Fitting an Italian slipper", the title of this print could be construed as a bit euphamistic and it was pointed out that both participants had high colour. *WikkiCommons*

and more important and some were self coloured. Spangles and metal thread embroidery were used for decoration and heels were lower and slimmer. Fabrics were still in use and more colours were available including pink and black.



Black backward slanting heel from the 1770s Photo: Alison Fairhurst

A blunt point to the toe became fashionable in the 1770s, tongues were peaked and the Italian heel was thinner with a wedge shaped filler. We saw an amazing black shoe with spangles where the heel was slanted back away from the foot. Fanny Burney wore shoes with spangles. Textured silk and satin were still used for fabric shoes and many had contrasting piping. More of the shoe could be seen when gowns began to be bunched up in the style à la Polonaise. Pointed toes came back into fashion during the following decade as did lower wedge shaped heels. Slip on shoes were starting to be seen, again in silk or satin but in more neutral colours. Decorations included fringes, pom poms and ribbons made into roses – rosettes – all of which could be changed by the wearer.



A pair of pink leather ladies mules, circa 1775-85, with rounded toes, pointed throat and remains of ivory wool braid edging, the insoles overhang the low white leather heels. 25cm, 10in long. © Kerry Taylor Auction 2017

Slip on shoes with lower heels were even more fashionable in the 90s, some with a drawstring for a better fit. Fewer fabrics were used as leather was introduced and a double layer of leather meant that decorative patterns could be cut in the top layer. Colours included black, green and blue. Mules, shoes with no backs, became popular, not just for working women but for all classes from Queen Caroline downwards. They were worn indoors and outdoors. Everyday shoes saw fabric being replaced by leather where both uppers and soles could be repaired. Such shoes are hard to find as they were discarded when completely worn out. Working class shoes with woollen cloth or ticking uppers have been found 'concealed', ie walled up in chimneys. The speaker also described clogs made of the same fabric as the shoes which were tied on over the shoes. Pattens were more useful as they raised the wearer above the dirt on the roads and pavements. They were always tied on with latchets and their metal bases could be heard clanking in use.

Alison had time to tell us about shopping for shoes in the C18. Bespoke shoes required the shoemaker to attend his customer in her home to measure her feet. This could be considered risqué as the smartly dressed shoemaker might be considered to be taking liberties while holding the lady's ankle or even leg. Specialised shoe shops began to appear in this century along with better roads and pavements which enabled customers to window shop, generally in the afternoon. Larger shops began to offer refreshments and here can be seen the beginning of the department store.

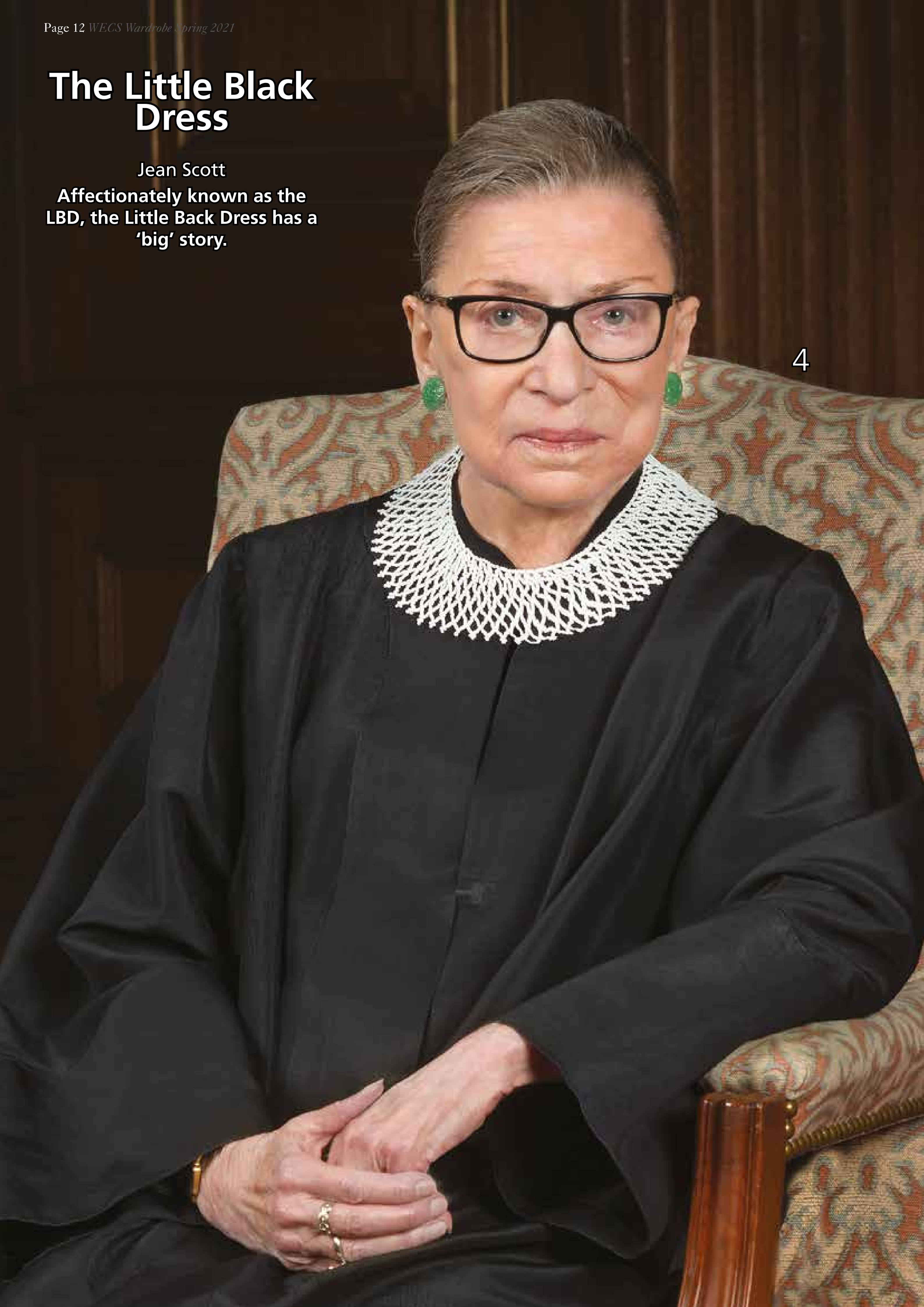
Measuring and fitting could now be done in the shop. We saw contrasting images of a poorer shop in Scarborough with shoes hanging in the window and a smart city store where pairs of shoes were neatly displayed on shelves inside. Advertising became important and a 'clicker' (a person hired to stand at the door) could sometimes be found at the entrance to a shop to entice customers to enter. Mail order shoes could be obtained, ready made and for fixed prices from a shoe warehouse. This led to lower prices, cheaper shoes and complaints from shoemakers. Labels could now be found stuck to the shoes giving the maker's name and address. Second hand shoes were traded, renovated, recovered or reworked with buckles replacing ribbons. Sometimes they had been enlarged or even made into mules. Shoes could be pawned and retrieved before they were needed for Sunday best.

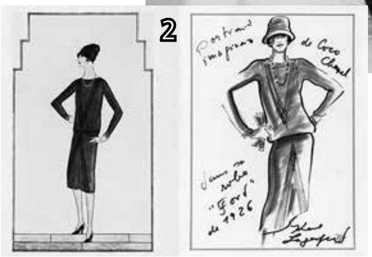
The speaker noted that the shoes she had studied from different collections all over the country looked very similar which might be considered surprising. She concluded with an excellent slide which was a montage of shoes through the decades which showed how little shoes had changed throughout the C18.

The Little Black Dress

Jean Scott

Affectionately known as the LBD, the Little Back Dress has a ‘big’ story.





1 and 2: Coco Chanel, with drawings of her Model T Ford LBD.
3: Mourning dress,late C19th.
4: Ruth Bader Ginsburg
5: John Singer Sargent's portrait of Madame Gautreau

Referred to in most fashion magazines as the staple garment of any woman's wardrobe, the LBD flatters most figure types and can be worn for just about any occasion.

However, depending on how old you are, if asked where this idea originated, most people would say Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel(1) or if you are a follower of 'influencers', Givenchy's black sheath worn by Audrey Hepburn in the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in 1961.

The small sketch of Chanel's design appeared in the October issue of Vogue in 1926 and was very briefly described, as

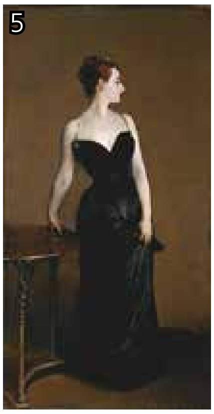
"The Chanel 'Ford' frock that all the world will wear is model 817 of black crêpe de chine. The bodice blouses slightly at the front and sides and has a tight bolero at the back. Especially chic is the arrangement of tiny tucks, which cross in front. Imported by Saks"(2)

It did not immediately create a sensation, being in competition with the designs of couturiers such as Lanvin, Patou, Vionnet and Doucet. Even Poiret, who was still in business at this time, apparently showed his displeasure when he remarked *"What are you in mourning for, Mademoiselle?"* Being equally acerbic Chanel replied *"For you, dear Monsieur"*. Although at the forefront of simpler fashion, Poiret claimed to have freed women from the corset, but Chanel it was who released their legs. With a disregard for convention Chanel's design was referred to as the 'Ford frock' as it mirrored the basic, reliable, available to all Model-T automobile produced by Henry Ford, who famously said customers could have any colour car they wanted as long as it was black. The LBD was modern, functional and chic and with the collapse of the stock market in 1929 together with many social changes brought about by WWI, including women's right to vote in 1928, a more egalitarian society was emerging. The scene was set for change.

The history of the black dress is however fraught with contradictions. The legacy of the Victorian obsession with wearing black, denoting melancholy and mourning is perhaps still with us(3), although it was Anna of Bretagne, a French Duchess and Queen, who introduced black for mourning in the 1400s in contradiction to the French nobility's custom of wearing white.

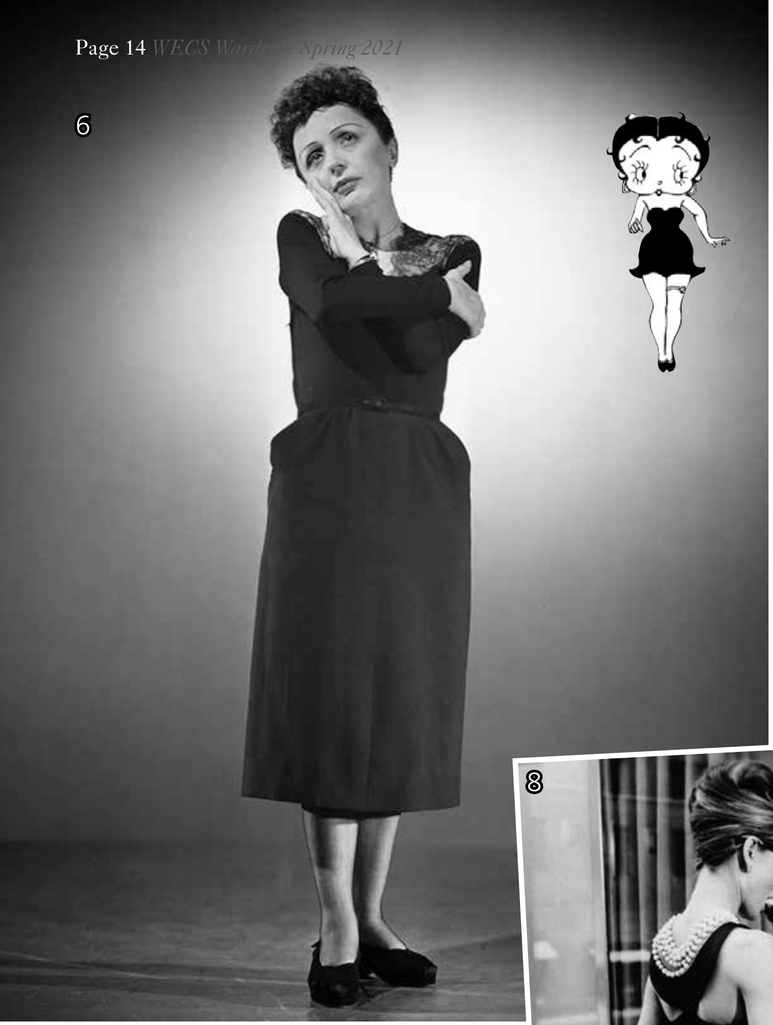
As well as melancholy, black has become associated with power. The legal profession and academics wear black robes. Ruth Bader Ginsburg (main image, opposite page), who was the second woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court and was a leading voice for women's rights, added her touch to the black dress with a very distinctive white bead collar(4). And of course, men wear black suits. It was Edward VII who wore a white shirt with black jacket and trousers for special occasions giving birth to the dinner suit.

The adoption of black in seats of power arose out of sumptuary laws. The nobility wore bright, strong colours to project their image but the fourteenth century saw the quality of black dyes improve with the use of 'gall-nuts' or what are commonly known as oak apples. The dyeing was expensive and so the emerging wealthy bankers of Europe chose black, expensive fabrics to subtly demonstrate their wealth and at the same time express their dignity and power. It wasn't long before the court and nobility followed suit. It became the colour of the Habsburgs and by the end of the sixteenth century was established throughout the courts of Europe. The sixteenth and seventeenth century saw black adopted by the Nonconformists who regarded bright colours as luxurious and therefore sinful. The colour also became associated with evil, so witches were portrayed wearing black clothes, and being the colour of night, it brought a sense of concealment and invisibility. The American artist Georgia O'Keefe said, *"There is something about black. You feel hidden away"*.



So what is the legacy of the black dress? Is it power or concealment, dignity or mystery, evil or melancholy? Perhaps it can be all of these things. In 1884 John Singer Sargent's portrait of Madame Gautreau, titled Madame X, caused outrage in the Paris Salon(5). Jonathan Jones, the *Guardian*'s Art critic, said it wasn't the naked shoulders or the impressionistic style but the dress that caused the sensation. Originally with the one thin strap falling off the shoulder, which was later painted out, it put the sex into the black dress. However, we had to wait another century before Elizabeth Hurley caused an equally sensational stir when she appeared in Versace's safety pin dress, often referred to as "THAT dress", at a 1994 film premier.

The 1930s saw Chanel's LBD emerge as the staple of French elegance with Wallis Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor owning several. The famous



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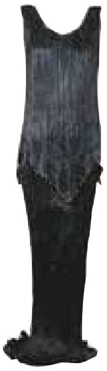
6 Edith Piaf, with inset Betty Boop from the same era
7 Dior's New Look
8 Audrey Hepburn Breakfasting at Tiffany's
9 Catherine Deneuve
10 Marilyn Monroe
11 Elizabeth Hurley
18 Mariano Furtunay Peplos gown, c1930
19 Galliano slip dress, 1994
20 Dior Perfume advertisement illustrated by RenéGruau



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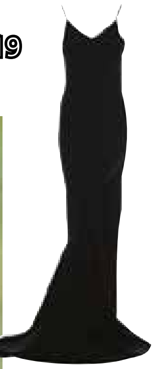

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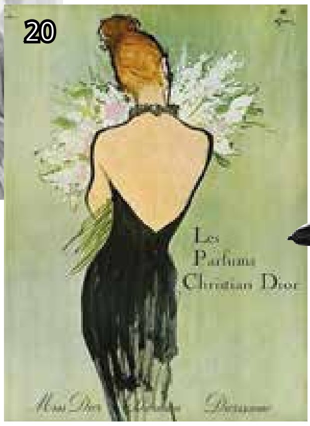

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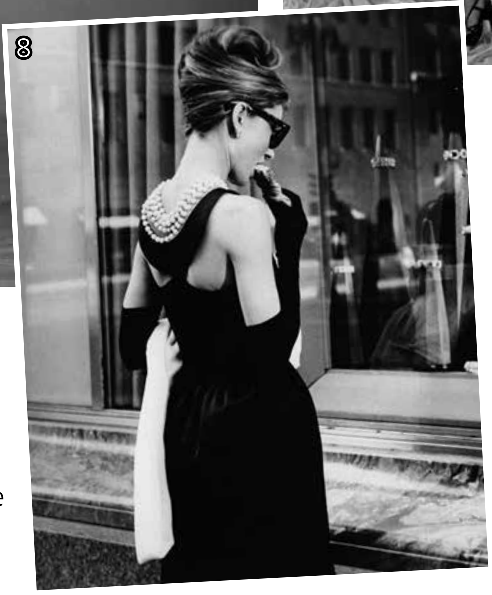

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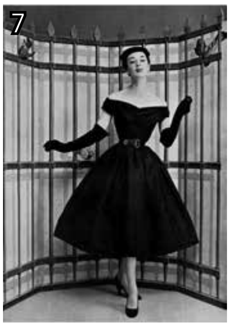
French singer Edith Piaf always wore black in her early stage career from 1935, with a classic heart shaped neckline drawing attention to her face(6). Here, performing a different role, the LGB concealed her diminutive figure and focused the audience's attention on her face and that astonishing voice.



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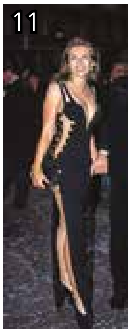
The 1950s saw the black dress change silhouette yet again when Dior caused riots in Paris at the extravagance of his 'New Look'(7). Longer and fuller skirts brought a more elegant, softer, feminine feel to fashion. However, the most iconic LBD must be the one worn by Audrey Hepburn's character Holly Golightly in the film *'Breakfast at Tiffany's'* in 1961(8). Worn with black elbow length gloves, black sunglasses and highlighted with a huge set of white pearls, she is seen gazing wistfully into the window of Tiffany's jewellers munching on a croissant and drinking a take away coffee. Hepburn captivated her fans, then and now, with waif like, girlish charm enhanced by the accessible sophistication of Givenchy's dresses. The simple sleeveless, Italian satin sheath dress has a stunning cut away back - very couture. Apparently the dress was originally much shorter but the film studio thought it showed too much of Hepburn's legs so the lower half was redesigned by the costume designer Edith Head. Auctioned in 2006 for £467,200, the profits were donated to Cité de la joie to raise funds for children in Calcutta. Two further copies are to be found in Givenchy's archive in Paris and the Museo del Traje in Madrid.

9

Givenchy's designs marked the beginning of the exposure of couture fashion to a huge filmgoing audience and, for future generations of couturiers the LBD was a blank canvas onto which they could put their own creations by experimenting with fabric, volume and cut. In 1966 another film, *Belle de Jour*, starred Catherine Deneuve wearing another simple black dress(9). This time arms and neck covered but with a hemline above the knee foretelling the miniskirt of the later 1960s. The striking contrast of the white collar and cuffs performing the same task as the pearls did for Hepburn's dress. The designer was Yves Saint Laurent who had launched his own label six years earlier and was bringing couture into a modern age. Film stars of the twentieth century have continued to don the LBD in order to portray, power, evil, sadness, mystery and sex, sometimes all at the same time. From Bette Davis to Grace Kelly to Marilyn Monroe(10), all enhanced their characters via the LBD and couturiers have continued to use 'red carpet' stars to promote their ideas. However, in 1994 Elizabeth Hurley, who was not yet a celebrity in her own right, appeared on the arm of actor Hugh Grant at the film premier of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. He was the star of the film but "THAT dress" made Hurley the star of the evening and launched her career(11). Designed by Versace in silk and Lycra and inspired by 'punk fashion', it was held together with



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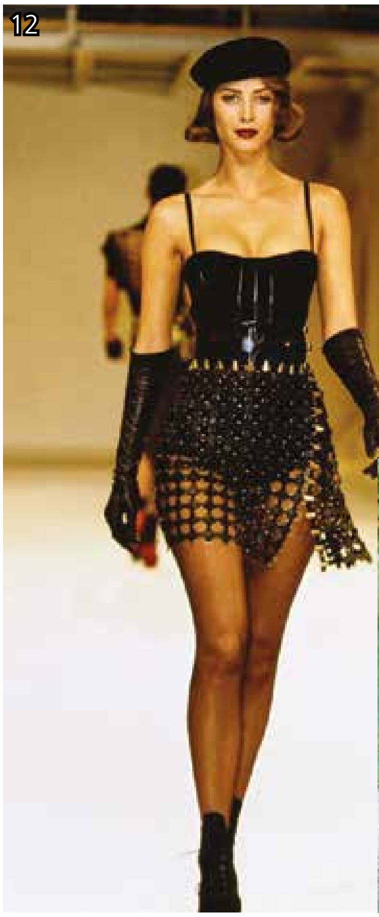
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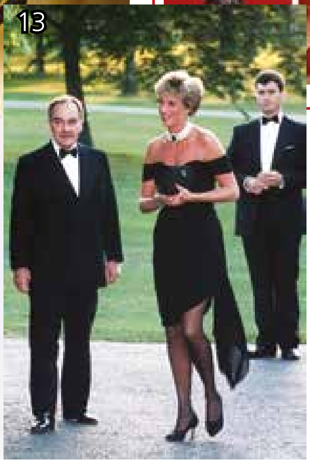
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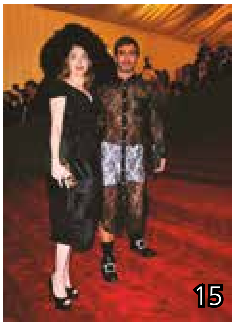
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12 Azadine Alaïa 1990s slip dress
13 Princess Diana's Revenge dress
14 André Talley's assembly of LBDs
15 Marc Jacobs in Rei Kawakubo's black lace dress
16 and 17 Golden Globe Awards 2018

16

17

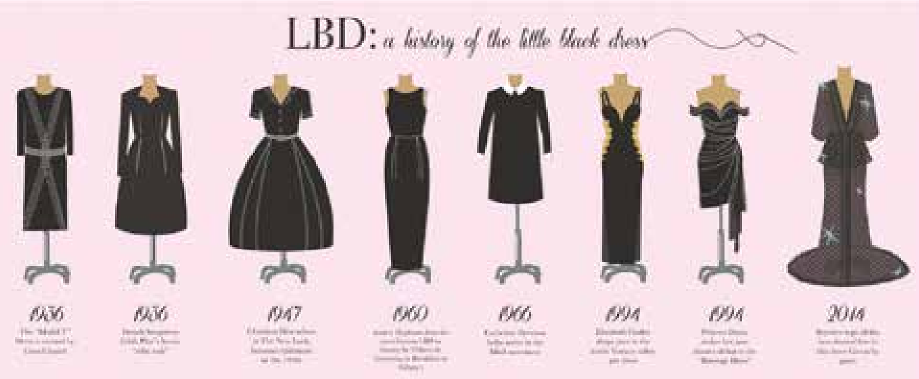
gold safety pins in strategic places and showed more Hurley than dress. A copy of the dress went on sale in Harrods in 2007 for over £10,000. This heralded the LBD story for the next two decades.

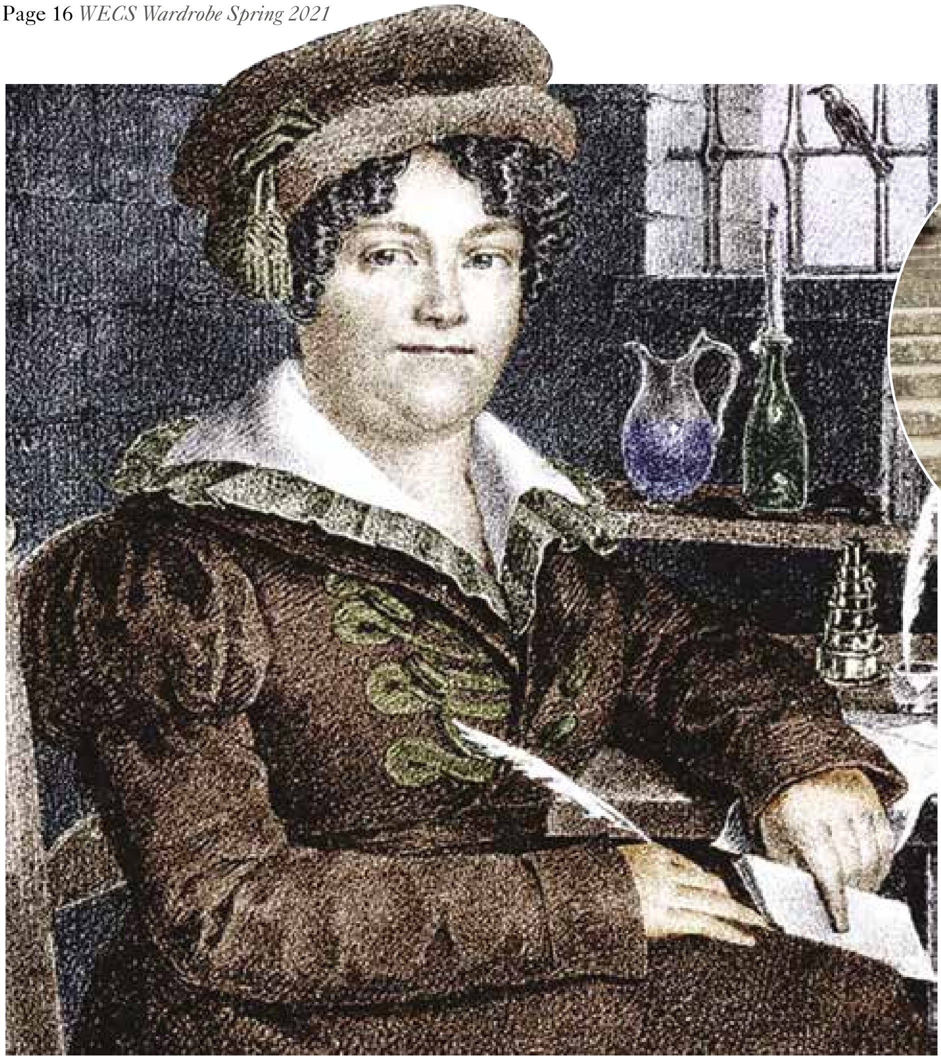
'Less is more' seems to be the driving force of fashion in the last three decades and virtually every designer would have black somewhere in his or her annual collections. Azzedine Alaïa designed his version of the 1990s slip dress with a nod to street fashion(12), but 1994 was the year of yet another iconic LBD. The Habsburgs may have adopted black to symbolise their power but when Princess Diana arrived at a party hosted by *Vanity Fair* did she have this in mind? No one knows, but the revealing dress caused a sensation. It became known as the 'Revenge Dress' as that same evening Prince Charles confessed in a BBC interview to his adultery(13). Greek designer Christian Stambolian had designed the LBD three years earlier, but Diana had thought it too "daring" at the time. The dress was worn with a large pearl choker, once again showing the drama created by white against black. In August 1997 shortly before her death, Diana sold the dress in a charity auction and it was purchased by an American businesswoman for £100,000.

André Leon Talley, a contributing editor to American *Vogue*, curated probably the definitive exhibition of 'the Little Black Dress' in 2013. Created at the Savannah College of ART and Design (SCAD) and then exhibited in Paris at the Mona Bismarck American Centre for Art and Culture, his connections to the socialites and film stars who inhabit the world of couture enabled him to bring together black dresses from the past and the present demonstrating the power of the LBD(14). The exhibition also included an astonishing black lace dress worn at the MET Gala in 2012 by the designer Marc Jacobs and designed by Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons. The artist Rachel Feinstein wore a Jacobs creation, which was a little more conservative(15).

So is the LBD that dress for all occasions where we can hide our figure faults and at the same time cultivate a sophisticated appearance, or is it more complicated than that? These are difficult times and at the Golden Globe Awards in 2018 the female stars of film and American television used the black dress to take a stand against sexual misconduct and inequality in the entertainment industry. The occasion was used to launch the *Times Up* initiative and together with the *#MeToo* movement support advocacy for women affected by sexual harassment(16). Did this represent melancholy or mourning, power or protest? They certainly did not lack glamour and some could be described as sexy(17).

Perhaps the LBD expresses the complexity of current times, about women and aesthetics(18, 19).





Marie Anne Lenormand

Empress Josephine's fortune teller.

Pandora Harrison

Marie Anne Lenormand (1772–1843) known as the Sybil of the Rue de Tournon, was a prophetess, a palm reader and a seeress. But most of all, she was a fortune-teller whose palm was often crossed with silver during the Napoleonic era and the greatest cartomancer of all time

A bright, confident Marie Anne arrived in Paris in 1786 at the age of fourteen. She claimed to have obtained her first deck of cards from gypsies who taught her how to read them. By seventeen she made her first impactful prediction, the fall of King Louis XVI. A star was born. Her flair for self-promotion quickly enabled her to set herself up as a "bookseller" which was in fact a front for her fortune-telling enterprise. But Mademoiselle Lenormand did indeed collect books and as an eager reader she diligently studied mathematics and astronomy as part of her practices. She dedicated herself to the hermetic arts and divination by studying a variety of folklore techniques such as reading tea leaves and coffee grounds, palmistry and scrying with mirrors. She was intuitive by instinct and would combine these with astrology and numerology and of course the main tool of her trade, playing cards. Her Rue de Tournon "shop" was adorned with phantasmic decoration including dried bats, nailed by their wings to the ceiling, stuffed owls, cabalistic signs and skeletons. Pretty much anything likely to impress a weak or superstitious mind in possession of a full purse. Her reputation grew and soon she attracted both royal and revolutionary clientele from the Princess de Lamballe to Robespierre. But the dark arts were illegal, and she occasionally found herself in prison but not for long and never without a deck of cards. During an early incarceration she encountered a fellow inmate, Madame Josephine Beauharnais, for whom she predicted would one day be raised higher than a queen. Madam Beauharnais became a widow during the Terror, was released from goal and married a soldier whose star was rising.

The soon to be Empress Josephine was fascinated by the superstitious beliefs of the culture of her homeland, Martinique, and is said to have believed in tarot as a form of divination. She developed a close confidant bond with Lenormand and sought her unique services on several occasions, much to Napoleon's disgust. His intense dislike for Lenormand was as a result of a palm-reading she did for him in 1807 in which she predicted his exile and death. His wife's persistent interest in Lenormand proved a source of conflict in the marriage and he did not want the harridan in the house. Josephine would resort to secretive visits to a certain bookseller on the Rue de

Two fortune teller outfits in black with matching accessories.

Tournon. Lenormand's reputation for the accuracy of her predictions supposedly led to her being asked to join the French secret police. Lenormand apparently predicted Josephine's divorce and with other such dire predictions including the fall of Napoleon's Empire, Lenormand fled Paris and retired to the countryside with a tidy fortune.

Her career lasted forty years but outside the *bon ton* of Paris she began a second career as an authoress. She wrote at least fifteen bestselling books on various subjects. These included detailed accounts of her various political and personal prophecies and the *Mémoires de l'Impératrice Joséphine (Memoirs of Empress Joséphine)*. The tome filled three volumes and included anecdotes from Lenormand's relationship with the Empress and even a copy of a letter of support that Joséphine had written to Lenormand when she faced persecution. The memoirs were dedicated to another of her clients, Czar Alexander I who, it is said, sent her a diamond ring in acknowledgement. Lenormand died in 1843 and was buried in Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

Upon her death, her poorly appointed heir, a nephew and devout Catholic, conveniently burned all of her occult library and paraphernalia such as astrological charts, her cards and all her notes; taking only the monetary fortune that she left behind.

To this day you can still purchase a deck of Mademoiselle Lenormand fortune telling cards based upon the 1799 German *Spiel der Hoffnung (The Game of Hope)*. This and other "Lenormand Oracle" decks were created after her death to capitalise on her fame. Unlike tarot cards, which rely more on personal interpretation of images and are read in relation to the cards around them, the Lenormand decks have everyday symbols like "key," "dog," or "house." Many decks also include traditional playing card suits on them: hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs. Each card has a straightforward meaning that doesn't change, whereas in tarot, a card can be read differently depending on the question asked and, in some cases, even the specific deck. The Lenormand cards and others like them grew in mainstream popularity as the 19th century progressed and the Spiritualist movement exploded. Through her relationships with some of the most powerful political figures of her time, Mademoiselle Lenormand broke through taboos (and laws) against fortune-telling and made the pastime fashionable.

Vibeke Ormerod introduces

Apart from dance, music, recitals and food at regency soirées there also has to be a fortune teller. Pandora is often the lady in black sitting at the little table in the corner with her Tarot cards at such events. She made her own outfit having seen the famous image of Marie Anne Lenormand in black.

Pandora enjoys making more theatrical as opposed to period accurate costumes that suit her taste which tends to run to the Gothic. She has made costumes from the 18th to the 20th century and her favourite period is late teens to the mid 1920s but she enjoys vintage styles from all periods. She posts photos of her work on Instagram and invites readers to take a look.

Her Instagram name is PandoraPitstop

Blackwork

Fiona Starkey

Blackwork is a term mostly associated with C16 patterns on high status linens - just think about almost any renaissance portait or something from the Tudors. Deceptively simple in theory, but still time-consuming, having your linens edged, embellished or smothered with embroidery was always going to send a strong message.

Basic counted stitches give a regular, geometric, usually repeating pattern which can get remarkably intricate. Later forms favour a more freeflowing, drawn style, often with 'filler' stitch patterns inside larger shapes.

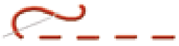
There is plenty of reference to discover if you go looking, so here we're talking about the actual doing of it.

For the counted stitch patterns, start with any evenweave fabric - traditionally white, traditionally linen - but if you haven't picked up a needle in a while you may want to start with Aida, the fabric preferred by cross-stitchers. Plain sewing thread will be too thin to show your effort, so use either a perlé (twisted, usually silky, various thicknesses), coton à broder (one thickish strand) or a stranded cotton (the most popular being Anchor and DMC) which you can gently tease out to use as single or multiple strands.

If you're using linen, work over at least two threads per stitch. You can hold the fabric in your hands but I prefer it held reasonably flat (not tight or it will stretch) in a hoop.

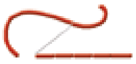
The Stitch diagrams left, show the basic ways of making a line. Lefthanders, just turn the page upside down.

The fabrics here are linen, overlaid with Aida.
The threads from the top: Stranded cotton, Coton à broder and perlé



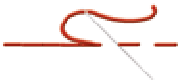
Running stitch

Simplest stitch for creating outlines, basis for fancier stitches. Also used in regular lines for a filler.



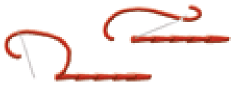
Backstitch

For decorative solid lines, outlines. Stronger then running stitch when used for seams.



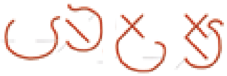
Holbein stitch

Essentially running stitch worked back on itself. Used where both sides show, because it's the same back and front. Favoured for expensive portraiture.



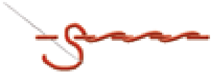
Split stitch

Needs to be slighter thicker thread than usual (or more strands) as the effect comes from piercing through the previous stitch.
Can be worked in two ways: one leaves a solid line on the reverse and one leaves a dotted line.



Cross stitch

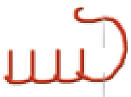
Used singly, in lines and en bloc for different weighting and fillers.
Forms the basis of many borders.



Whipped running stitch

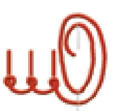
A second thread is caught on the surface by looping around running stitch or backstitch for a heavier line.
Quick way of thickening lines, or for adding a contrast colour.
Also used where an expensive thread needs to show on the surface.

Edging



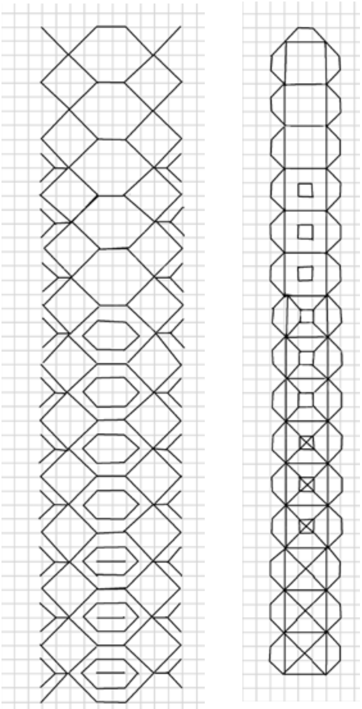
Blanket stitch/buttonhole stitch

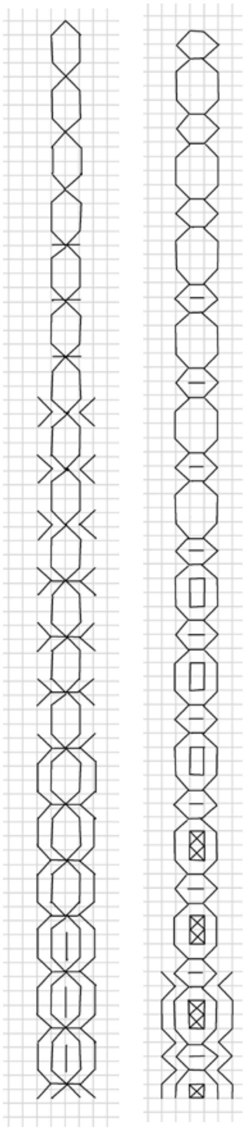
Functional stitch holds and flattens a rolled edge. Also used to give a decorative edge to a motif. The closer together the stitches,the blacker the line.

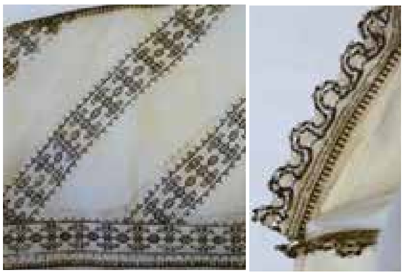


Tailor's buttonhole

As blanket stitch, but with a twist of thread round the needle before the stitch is pulled closed. Stronger than blanket stitch and gives a firm border.

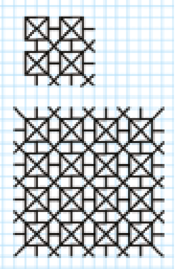






Decorative stripes on a sleeve and edging on a collar. Both examples from the Fashion Museum, Bath.

The diagrams on these pages suggest a square per stitch. They start with a very basic pattern and show how you can add extra stitches to the same pattern to make it denser and more ornate.

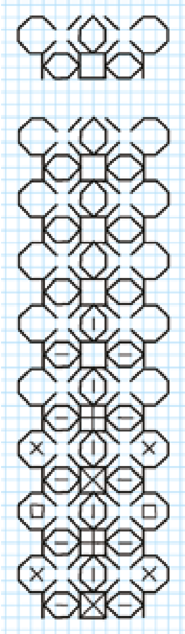


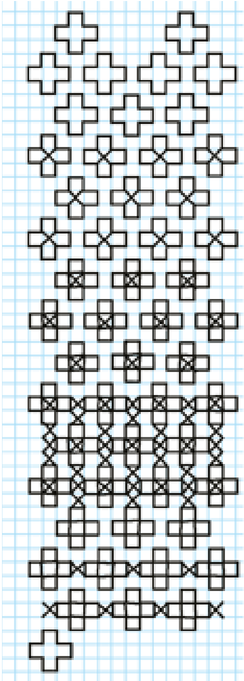
The linear patterns on the left make good borders or 'stripes' on a larger area. You can use borders in varying depths with simple repeats one above the other and with the addition of some small linking stitches they also work as overall patterns.

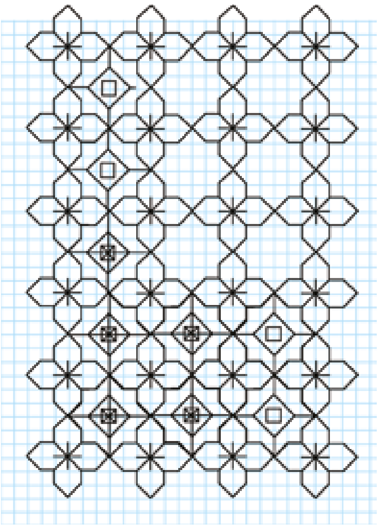
With the more overall patterns on this page, the basic motif is shown separately, the additions and developments are your choice. These can be slimmed down to make borders too.

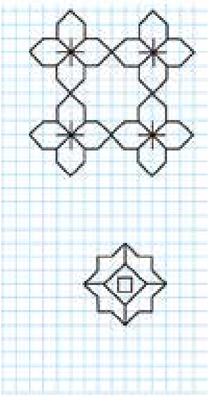
Start simple and work up. It's a good idea to get some squared paper and trace the pattern before you start as this will help get the shapes into your head and work out the most efficient order of stitching. It's also easier to rub out than to unpick.

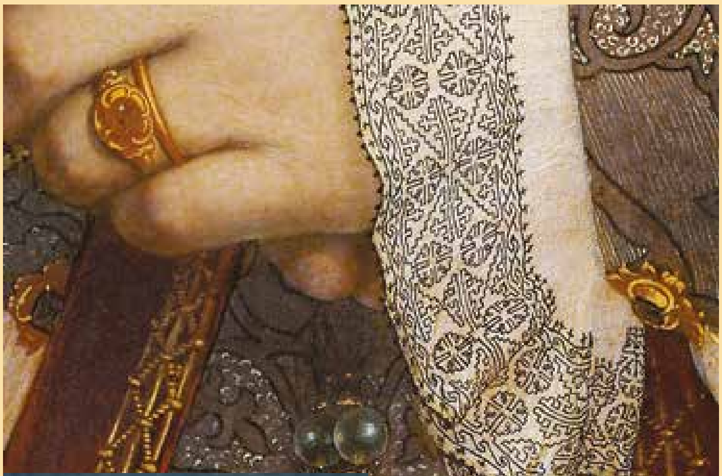
Try and keep your stitching economical. Great big passes at the back have a habit of showing through and if you're wearing it, catching on anything available.

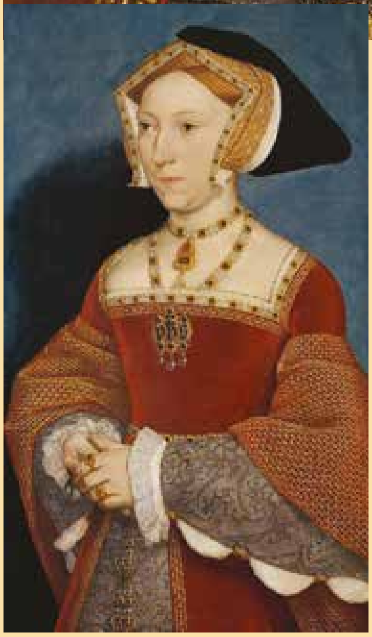








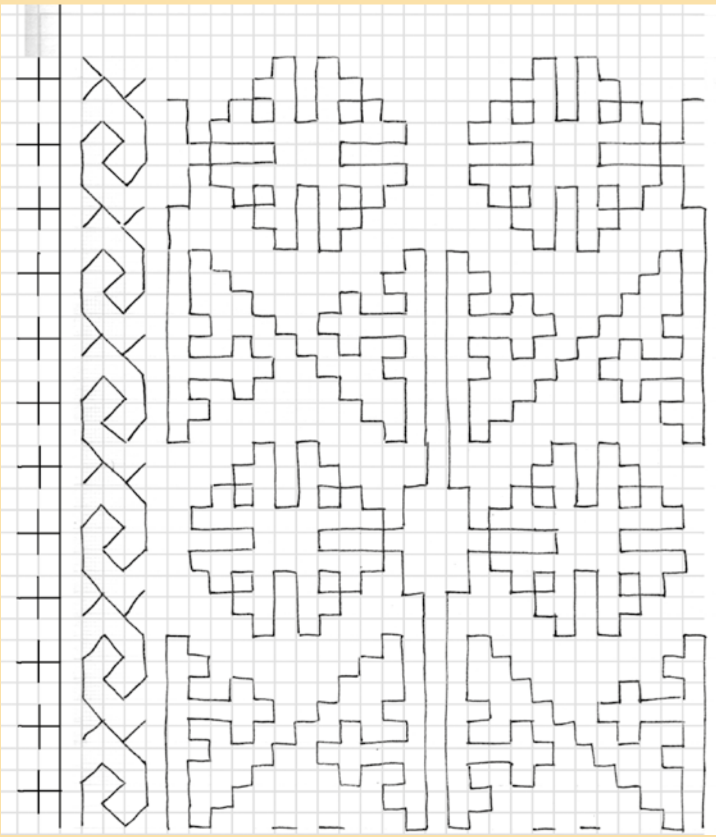




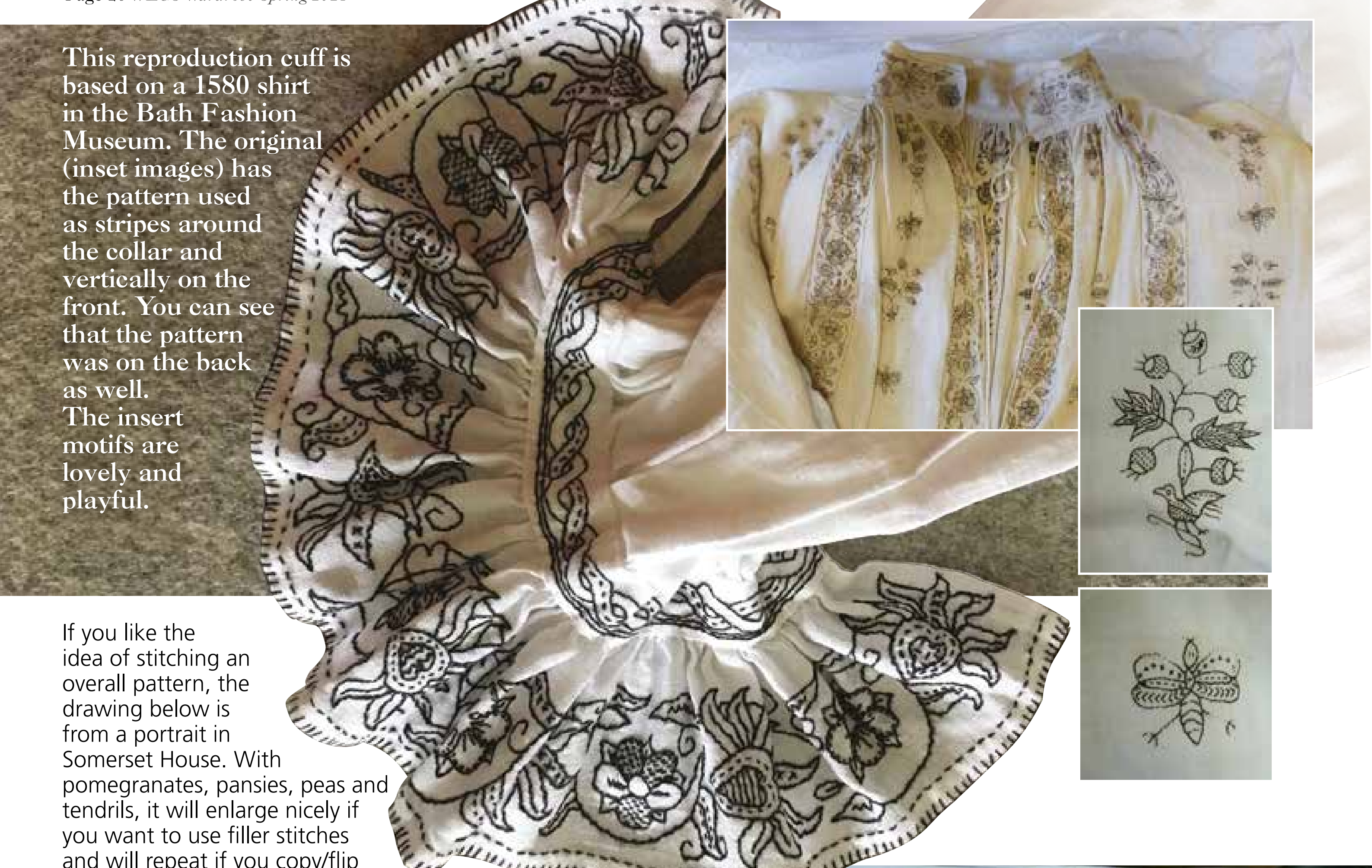
Kunsthistorisches Museum
Hans Holbein 1536

Jane Seymour's sleeve

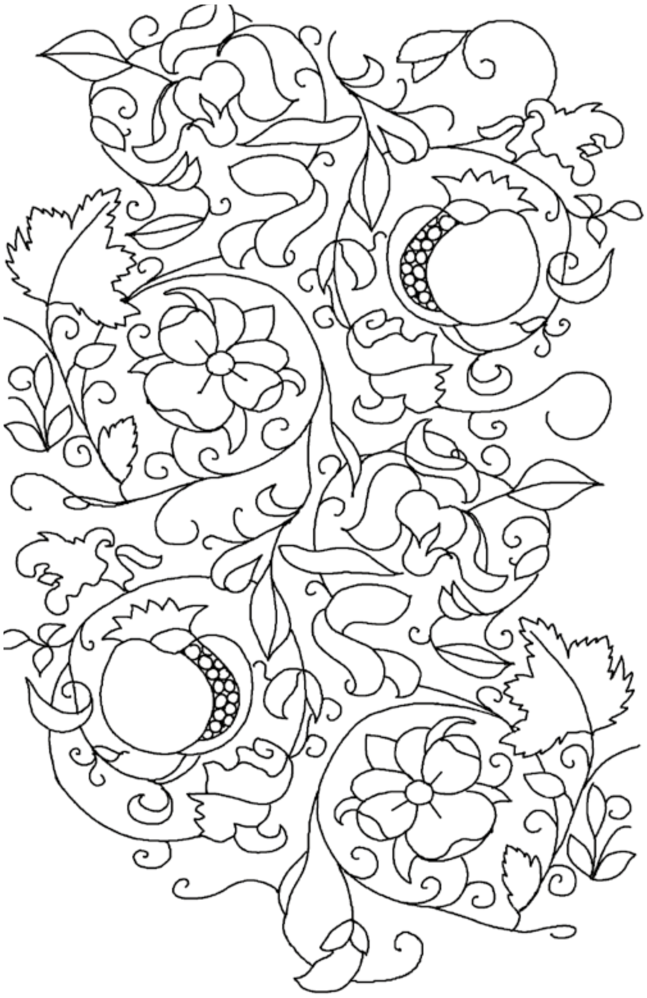
Feeling a little more ambitious? This is a brilliant example of Holbein stitch and working out the first row is excellent for the concentration. The portrait shows a very delicate flowing pattern at the neck edge and the detail shows the inside of the wrist ruffle.

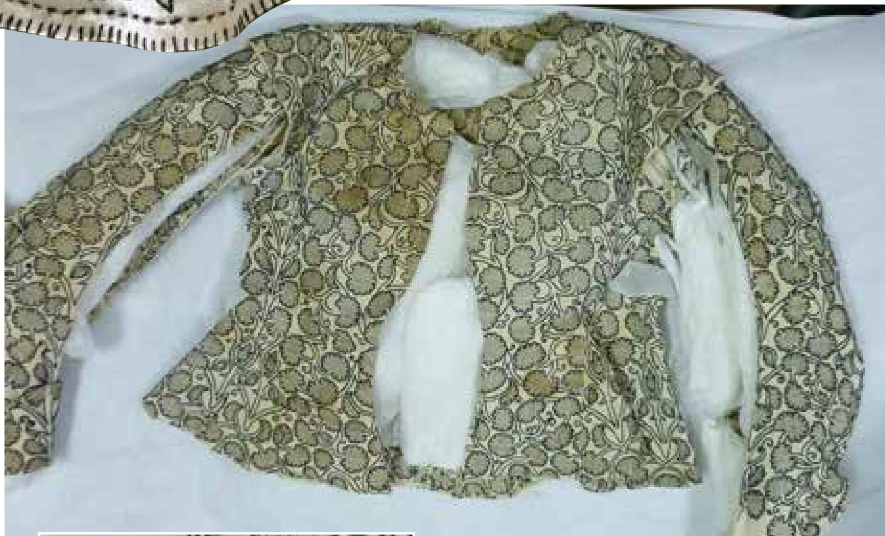


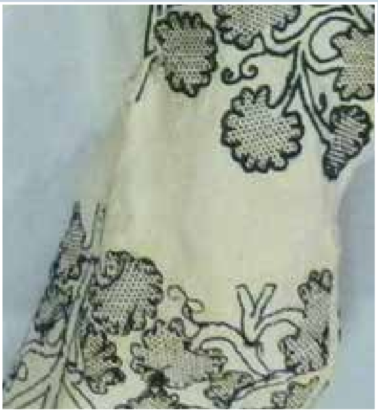
This reproduction cuff is based on a 1580 shirt in the Bath Fashion Museum. The original (inset images) has the pattern used as stripes around the collar and vertically on the front. You can see that the pattern was on the back as well. The insert motifs are lovely and playful.



If you like the idea of stitching an overall pattern, the drawing below is from a portrait in Somerset House. With pomegranates, pansies, peas and tendrils, it will enlarge nicely if you want to use filler stitches and will repeat if you copy/flip the image and align the gaps. The odd extra tendril will disguise the joins!







Late C16 examples from the Fashion Museum, Bath.

Slightly later, this woman's bodice has overall embroidery which must have been planned meticulously to keep the patterns flowing correctly when the garment was made up. On the larger image (detail left), note the blank space where the cuff turns over for wear. The detail also shows the back workings of the embroidery - helpful if you want to work out the stitch construction.

Jette Roy Finlay-Heath

Whitework

Vibeke Ormerod

Jette Roy Finlay-Heath is an expert in the traditional forms of Danish whitework and has taught Danish counted thread, whitework, and hedebo embroidery for many years in England, Canada and the States.

She has kindly allowed me to write about her and her life with needlework. All the works photographed are by her.

Jette learnt whitework embroidery from her mother who developed her own designs and for whom a mathematical mind was a clear asset.

Jette joined her mother's stitching group at the age of sixteen while they were working on a wedding present of dinner table coasters for the youngest of the three Danish princesses, Anne Marie, who was marrying King Constantine of Greece. In Denmark these coasters are still occasionally used at festive occasions.

Jette, however, decided to pursue a career in industrial engineering, which eventually brought her to the U.K. Having settled with a family she returned to whitework embroidery, got the City and Guilds certificate and started teaching. I met her at Urchfont Manor in the early 80s when Jette taught white work embroidery and I taught machine quilting and appliqué.

Research into hedebo embroidery had now really taken hold of Jette. Her mother's designs sparked a renewed interest.

Jette Roy Finlay-Heath
UNIQUE HEDEBO EMBROIDERY KITS
Hedebo Starburst 13" x 13"
A Delightful Dessert 6" x 6"
Falster Syning Coaster 6" x 6"
For prices, brochure or for more information:
email: jetteroyfinlaywhitework@yahoo.co.uk
Tel UK: +44 (0)1672 870707

The embroidered pieces were traditionally used on collars and cuffs on ladies' apparel, runners, tray cloths, coasters, chair backs and arm rests. Her grandmother and great-grandmother used to wear these accessories and national Danish costume, coffin covers, bonnets and decorative towels were all embellished with hedebo.

The term hedebo comes from: "hede", heath and "bo", "to live and refers to the people living on the heathland south of Copenhagen who developed the technique of hedebo, a term which covers several forms of white embroidery which originated in the middle 1700s. Three hundred years ago farmers in the region grew flax and made their own linen. The embroideries the women made were taken to Copenhagen along with any farm produce to be sold at market.

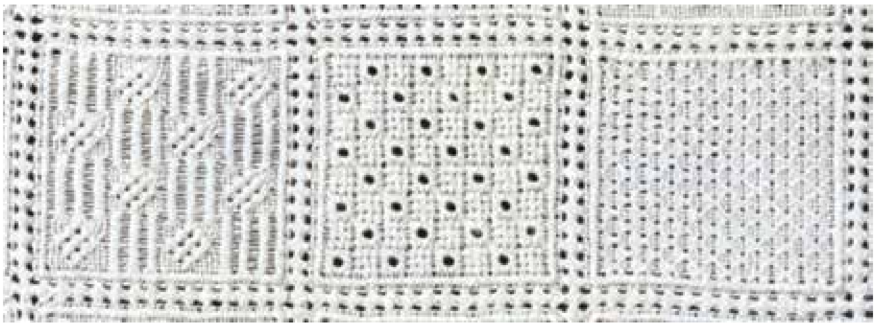
The varied techniques which evolved over the next hundred years in the farming community were subsequently developed by the middle classes until around 1820. A renewed sense of national pride in the mid-1800s made Danes aware that this traditional handcraft should be preserved. In its collection, the Greve Museum, in the Hedebo region, has hundreds of fine pieces to study.

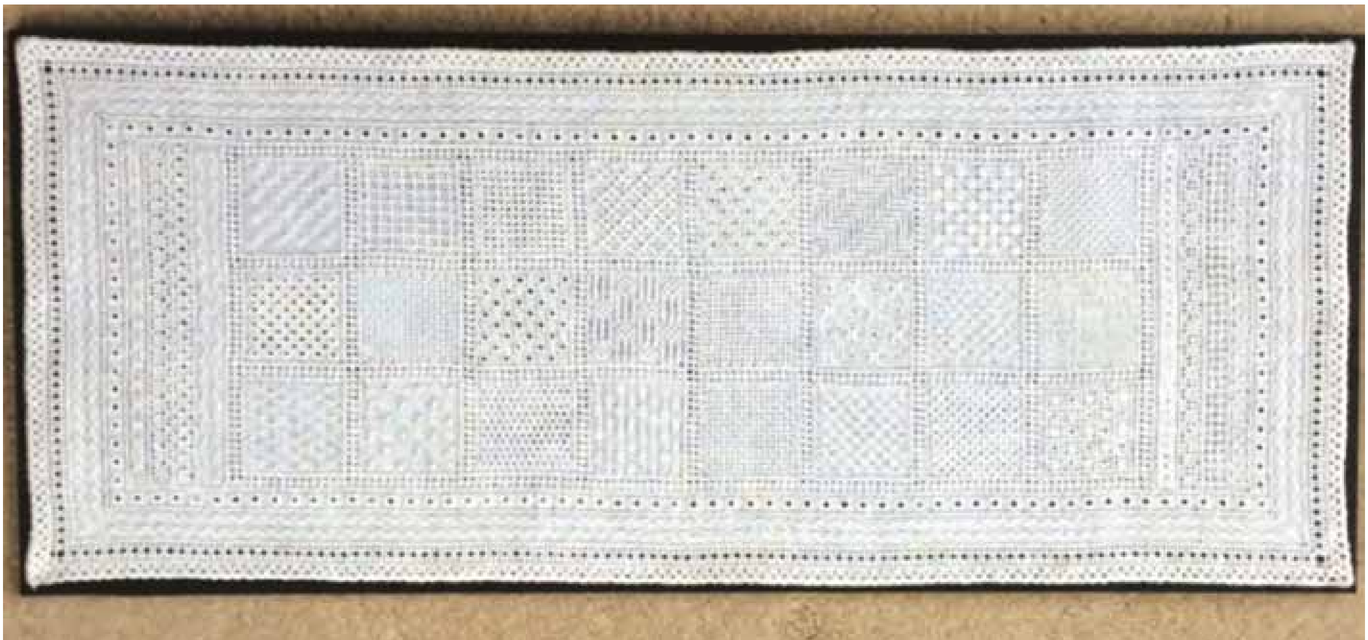
www.hedebosyning.dk/hedeboeng.

When Jette started developing her own designs (and she has more than 500 to her credit), she drew everything by hand on specially printed graph paper but later learned about EasyGrapher Professional, a computer program for drawing designs on a grid, and EasyGrapher Stitch Wiz for drawing stitches. She has used the software ever since.

She recommends traditional materials: good, sturdy, hard- wearing materials. Pure linen fabric and linen threads will shrink the same, wear the same, stand up to a lot of washing and last well. Hence there are so many very old and well preserved pieces of hedebo embroidery in our museums today.

Pieces can shrink up to eight percent after


Above: a detail from the Millenium Myriorama, shown below.



Hedebo Enchantment, 13"x 13"

several washings, so that has to be taken into account when designing a piece to fit a certain measurement.

Jette feels that a linen ground of twenty-six threads to the inch is a good thread count for learning. She uses a half-bleached linen thread, Bockens, made in Sweden, in 35/3ply, 40/2 ply, 60/2 ply and 24 and 26 tapestry needles. The more the fabric and threads are washed, the whiter they become.

A helpful tip in the preparation of the linen is to stitch a "helper" thread over and under every two threads to mark the horizontal and vertical centers. Every ten threads, a short stitch is sewn at a ninety-degree angle to the helper thread, making the design easier to count and follow.

The ideas for designs come from mosaics in churches, images in books, and very old hedebo. Jette has a sheet of motifs from her mother's files that includes the traditional religious symbols of fish, lamb, eagle, wine, cross, earth with the cross, ladder, cup, key, crown, dove, hare and horse.

"I often use the same motifs and borders in my designs," she says. "The Nordic borders in drawn-thread work are used in almost all of my designs as they set off the techniques so well."

An Origami Ort Box

There are six specific hedebo embroidery techniques.

Counted threadwork-flatwork, (Tællesyning- Platværk), is the oldest known hedebo technique and has been stitched since mid-1700. In the Renaissance it was known as punto reale, but in Copenhagen it was named Platværk.

Drawn thread work, (Dragværk), has been stitched since the second half of the eighteenth century and was known in Italy during the Renaissance. Motifs include horses, people, trees, lions, and birds.

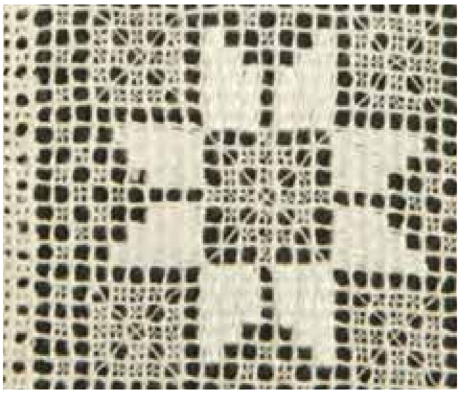
Square cutwork, (Rudesyning), blossomed in the early nineteenth century. Monograms were stitched, and motifs include kneeling stags, horses, birds, and tulips in geometric forms.

Drawn thread work sections with a chain stitch contour, (Hvidsøm or Maskesyning), developed immediately thereafter, from 1820–1840.

Hedebo, Italian cutwork, (Baldyring), sometimes called Old Hedebo, appeared simultaneously with Hvidsøm, from 1835–1855, but differs from the latter in that it takes its inspiration from reticella. Spiders, spikes, points, and arcs are stitched in large openings.

Needlelace, (Udklipshedebo), with stitches worked in aria, in the air, became fashionable in the mid- nineteenth century.

A Delightful Dessert, a coaster, 6"x6"



Mammoth Hedebo Experience, 17 3/4" square and detail, right

"When I design for classes, I design a series with all six hedebo techniques so my students learn all of them. It is difficult to aesthetically combine all six in one piece. I have designed only one large complex piece, Hedebo Enchantment, with all six hedebo techniques."

The border around many of the works is one of the Nordic holeseam borders in drawn thread. "It enhances the simple design in the center. It is an old stitch found in the Danish book, 100 Old Nordic Holeseams, published by Clara Væver. This book mentions a French design with white seam patterns published in 1587, translated into German. More than one hundred borders, each with a different name date to before 1700, all of them from different European countries. I use a lot of these in my designs, adding my own twist".

Hedebo rings are made on a hedebo ring gauge, also called a couronne. Linen thread is wrapped several times around the stick at the chosen diameter. Then the thread is pushed to the next smaller diameter and buttonhole stitches are stitched very close together from the outside of the ring and down into the center and pulled tightly to complete the ring.

"Rings can be stitched onto the edge of a runner, slipped through a hole cut out of a center piece, or inserted into a hedebo pattern. Sometimes small buttonhole pyramids called hedebo needlelace, are stitched around the edges of the ring or to an edge of a finished piece of embroidery. Young farm labourers thought it was funny that girls cut holes in their embroideries only to stitch them up again!"

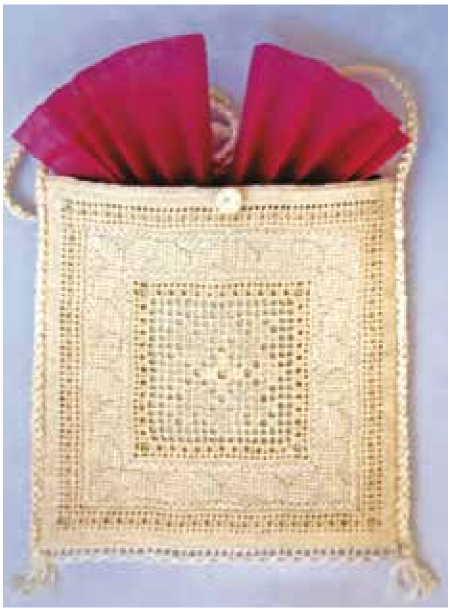
The latter three techniques, Hvidsøm (drawn thread) Hedebo Baldyring, (Italian-type cutwork), and Udklipshedebo (needlelace) are difficult, but Jette has been teaching them to her advanced students.

The drawn-thread sections with a chain stitch contour, in Hvidsøm technique, presents the first stylistic challenge to strict geometric stitching in the direction of the fabric's weave.

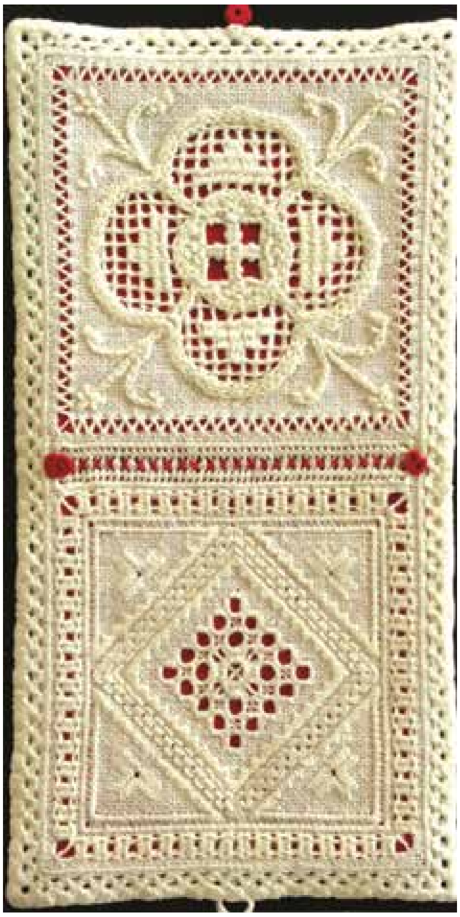
Hedebo Baldyring looked coarse, and for a time, it was out of favour. But when it was used as needlelace, people began to admire it and use it in their homes and on their clothing.

The idea for Jette's cleverly engineered Origami Ort Box that folds flat when not in use came about when teaching in New Orleans: "One of my students had an ort box, and I told my husband about it. He is a professional magician and an expert in origami. So, we worked together to create a stitched version." The sides and base are 2 $^1/_2$" squares stitched in a variety of pulled thread stitches, edged in satin stitch on a single piece of linen.

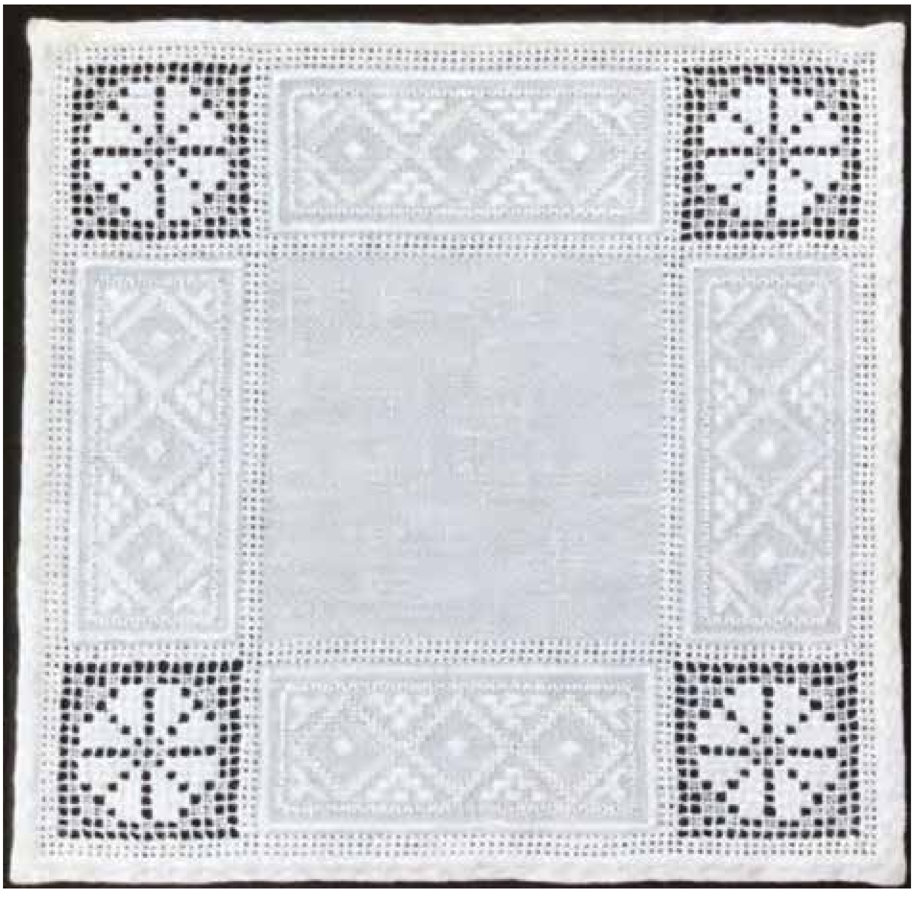
If you want to know more you are welcome to contact Jette.



A bag in Hedebo dragværk, 6"x 6".



A needle case, 4 $^1/_3$"x 8 $^2/_3$"



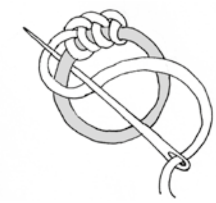
Left: A traditional Danish piece, here a napkin for a bread basket, 10 $^1/_4$" x 10 $^1/_4$"

Dorset buttons

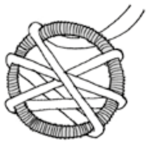
With apologies to Dorset, these instructions are very basic to get you started.

Here goes...

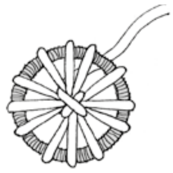
Use wool or a thread like coton à broder to start and a ring about an inch (2.4cm) diameter so you can see what you're doing. A round-ended needle like a tapestry needle works well.



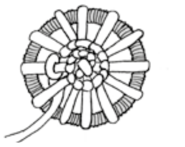
Cut a long piece of thread and tie it on to a ring with a knot.
Hold the knot and work blanket stitches round the ring, pushing them together as you go to cover the ring without leaving gaps. Your last stitch will catch into the first to complete the circle.
Push the ridge you've formed to the back or towards the centre to leave a smooth outer edge.



With your thread held at the 12 o'clock postion behind the ring, take it down to the six o'clock postion, then back up in front to 12 o'clock, neatly halving the circle.
Turn the ring slightly and make another spoke the same way. Your first spoke will align; your next will offset because you're turning the ring.
Work your way around, winding half a dozen times to make 12 spokes. You can play with more or less when you've got the hang of it.



After your last spoke, take the thread up to the front and make a cross stitch in the centre to pull all the spokes gently into the midddle and stabilise them.
With your thread at the front, backstitch your way round the spokes - over one spoke, behind the same spoke and the next one, back up to the front and repeat until you've filled the ring.



There are several ways to finish.
- A couple of neat stitches in the back and cut.
- Leave a long tail which you can use to sew on to something later.
- Take several stitches across the back and blanket stitch to make a bar.

The rings can be found quite easily in craft sites if you search for Dorset button supplies. Experimenting with the number of spokes, leaving deliberate gapping in your circling and using stitches other than simple backstitch fillings give all sorts of pattern variations and there are plenty of instruction books and pamphlets if you want to take it further.

Light and dark: A consideration

Tony Cooper

Before the days of political correctness we used to have westerns on TV where you could tell what side you were supposed to be on by the colour of the hats; goodies in white, baddies in black. I say "colour" but, of course, the telly was black and white. By the way, what a shame that "shades of grey" has now taken on such an unsavoury association.

A century and more ago, theatrical melodramas and subsequently silent films used exactly the same convention; the poor, innocent heroine in her pure white dress and the black-hearted (there it goes again) dastard (and, yes, I have spelled that correctly) twirling his moustache and swishing his black cloak.

Incidentally, did you see the BBC's wonderful version of Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman's *Good Omens*? Aziraphale and Crowley, of Heaven and Hell respectively, follow the prescribed dress code of course by occasionally sporting their white and black wings.

Despite Roald Dahl's attempts to correct our misconceptions about witches (according to him, they always wear gloves to hide their claws and have blue spit) we still cling to the traditional notion that the ones with noses as knobbly as their besoms wear black with maybe a daring bit of red whereas the boring goodies of the occult are "white witches".

So there you have it, in black and white, the moral significance of those colours that is woven throughout our language and imagery. The contrast of white and black (light and darkness, day and night) has a long tradition of metaphorical usage, traceable to the Ancient Near East, and explicitly in the Pythagorean Table of Opposites. In Western culture as well as in Confucianism, the contrast symbolizes the moral dichotomy of good and evil.

Actors will often say its much more interesting and more fun to play a meaty baddie part than a mimsy goodie one and the Catholic church will say we are all born with original sin and sin is a daily occurrence (or at least weekly). It's small wonder therefore that linguistically "black" seems to have more frequent and interesting connotations than "white".

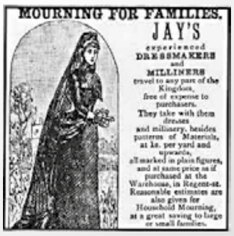
Even expressions involving white are often tinged with cynicism if not downright ironic; a whited sepulchre, a white lie *("Oh yes, madam, that day-glo yellow microskirt really suits you")*, whiter than white, a white elephant. But we do have those lovely white weddings in which the glow of the bride's purity is reflected, don't we? Hold that thought; I'll come to it later.

Black is said to be associated with power, fear, mystery, strength, authority, formality, elegance, sophistication, death and evil. Quite an eclectic collection don't you think? But why should it be linked to fear? Tone's theory of the season is that it's a small leap from black to night. We are creatures of the day with relatively poor night vision and there are predators out there in the darkness! Who wouldn't be anxious?

Dispatches

When I was a student in the early '70s I went to an exhibition entitled *"Death, Heaven and the Victorians"*, which celebrated (if that's the right word) the culture of death with its strict etiquette and mores regarding dress and behaviour. It was a lucrative business for an entire industry - draper, seamstress, milliner, haberdasher, jeweller, undertaker, parson, grave-digger, mason – the more the merrier.

You won't be surprised to know that men had it relatively easy. In the main they were allowed to get on with their lives, simply wearing their usual dark suits along with black gloves, hatbands and cravats. The rules for women were much more prescriptive. For them mourning was an occupation in itself.



MOURNING FOR FAMILIES.
JAY'S
experienced
DRESSMAKERS
and
MILLINERS
travel to any part of the Kingdom,
free of expense to purchasers.
They take with them dresses
and millinery, besides patterns of Materials, at 1s. per yard and upwards,
all marked in plain figures, and at same price as if purchased at the Warehouse, in Regent-st.
Reasonable estimates are also given for Household Mourning, at a great saving to large or small families.

The grim reaper having struck, a Victorian woman would be expected to acquire a complete wardrobe – pronto. **One shop that was there to help, Jay's, opened**

in 1841 in London's Regent Street. It was a kind of warehouse for the bereaved providing every conceivable item for the whole family. This would extend through the dresses and cloaks to blackedged handkerchiefs, black caps, bonnets, veils, parasols and jet jewellery. The entire ensemble was colloquially known as "widow's weeds" (from the Old English word, meaning "garment").

Of course if you can sow the seeds of superstition whilst catering for the mourners' needs then all the better. It was considered bad luck to keep mourning clothes – particularly crape – in the house after mourning ended so you were assured of repeat custom: supplying it all over again when the next loved one passed away.

With the Victorians' obsession with codification, mourning was classified into three stages, namely, full mourning, secondary mourning and half mourning. For the widow, full mourning lasted two years during which she would wear dresses of non-reflective paramatta silk or the cheaper bombazine. (Readers of Dickens will no doubt have come across widows in bombazine.) An essential part of her clothing was a weeping veil of black crape. By all accounts that stuff was horrible: rough, scratchy and claustophobic.

Full mourning imposed severe restrictions on her social life and to change the costume ahead of time was considered disrespectful to the deceased and, if the widow was still young and attractive, suggestive of potential sexual promiscuity.

Secondary mourning, lasting nine months, allowed the veil to be lifted and worn back over the head. The widow could wear minor jewellery. Half mourning lasted for three months and the widow was allowed to wear some coloured fabrics such as lilac, grey, lavender and purple.

Appropriate jewellery could be worn, such as jet or the braided hair of the deceased.

Going back another few hundred years the colour of deepest mourning among medieval European queens was white. This royal tradition survived in Spain until the end of the 15th century. In 1934, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands reintroduced white mourning after the death of her husband Prince Henry. It has remained a tradition in the Dutch royal family with, in 2004, the four daughters of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands wearing white to their mother's funeral. In 1993, the Spanish-born Queen Fabiola adopted it for the funeral of her husband, King Baudouin of Belgium. In 1938 Queen Elizabeth (who subsequently became Queen Mother) was required to accompany King George VI on a state visit to France whilst in mourning for her mother. For this she drew on the custom for the Queens of France to wear *deuil blanc* [white mourning] for her White Wardrobe created by Norman Hartnell.

Matches

I said I'd get to weddings. From time immemorial weddings were less about the union of a man and a woman and more a union of two families or even two kingdoms, usually with a view to increasing their power, wealth and influence, It wasn't uncommon for the bride and less frequently the groom to be of a disturbingly young age and standing seemingly as pawns in the power union. For the ceremony they would be dressed in the richest clothing affordable to signify the wealth of the power bloc they represented.

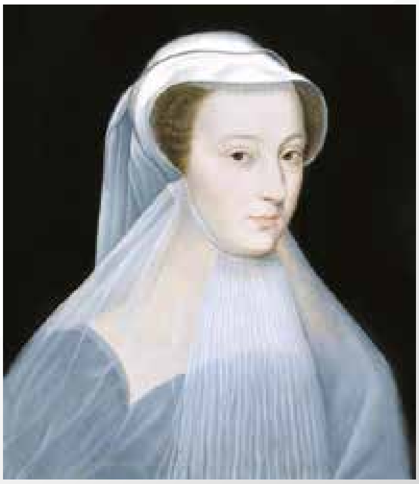
And white weddings? White is said to represent purity or innocence and while it is often considered to signify the bride's "condition", blue was once the colour worn to symbolize youth. Queen Victoria is often credited with introducing the fashion for a white wedding gown but she wasn't the first royal to wear one. It goes back much further.

In 1406, Princess Philippa, the twelve year old daughter of Henry IV, married Eric of Pomerania at Lund Cathedral in Scania, Sweden and for the first time on royal record the bride wore white. The reason for that choice is not recorded but she was due to be crowned Queen of Sweden immediately after the wedding ceremony and it is traditional for a white robe to be worn for such occasions, signifying humility.

Wedding Dresses

Wedding Dresses from the Bowes Collection
ISBN 0-9502375-6-6
Very few items in anything other than white!

According to *Marriage à la Mode* [National Trust], by the late eighteenth century, white weddings were becoming increasingly popular even giving rise to the superstition that it is bad luck to marry in any other colour. It has to be said that "white" covered a multitude of pale tones including ivory and cream.



The 19-year-old Mary Queen of Scots in mourning in France in 1561, not long after the deaths of her father-in-law, mother and husband

Last thoughts

Entre nous, Pythagoras, in a spare moment away from his triangles, is said to have produced a Table of Opposites – ten in all. Although he didn't include "white" and "black", he did list "light" on the left against "darkness" on the right, similarly "male" against "female". To this, Aristotle applied a "moral prestige" to the left-hand column where the "good" things are listed. As a result he had the cheek to consider male to be better than female! He sat around pontificating whilst the women around him put the food on the table. Would any 21st-century man behave like that?

Confucian philosophy is much more measured. Yin and yang, traditionally represented in black and white, is a concept of dualism, describing how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected and interdependent in the natural world, and how they may give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another. Together they constitute the Tao or, as Douglas Adams would have it, *"Life, the Universe, and Everything"*.

The Mango Seed Dress

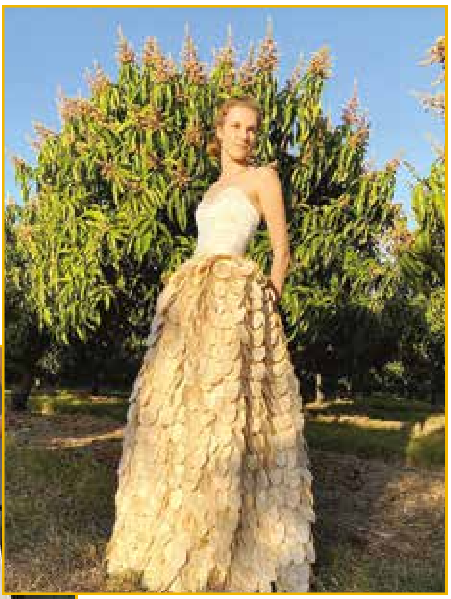
By Sarah Bartlett

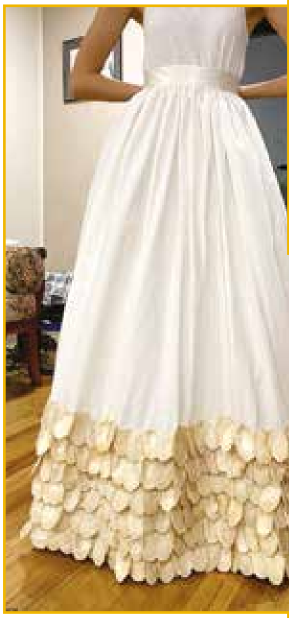
The Dress made from Calpyso Mango Seeds

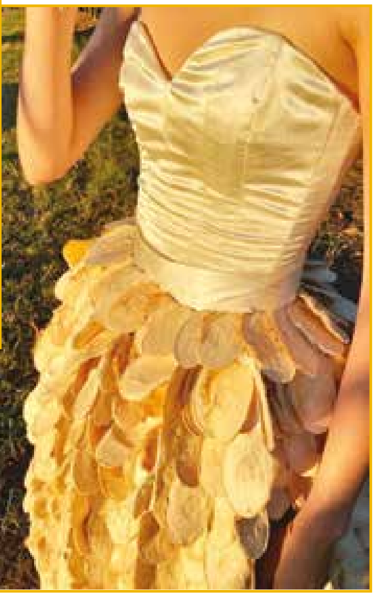
Last December while looking at the BBC Australian world news online (just checking that eldest son wasn't making the headlines out there), I came across an article about Jessica Collins, an 18 year old student from Queensland, who wanted to highlight the terrible food wastage caused by supermarkets rejecting slightly imperfect produce. Her parents own a mango farm and they reckon around 5000 kg of their mango production is rejected every year just because of their shape even though there is nothing else wrong with the fruits.

Jessica decided to design her own graduation dress and use mango seeds to cover the skirt. In order to do this, she collected 700 of the mis-shaped mangos, cut the flesh off to extract the seeds inside. She then cleaned them off with her father's pressure hose removing any last bits of flesh and making sure they were free from any other nasties. She air-dried the seeds (occupying large areas of the house and leaving a lingering perfume of dried mango) and when throughly dried, cut each seed in half thereby ending up with 1400 pieces with which to cover the skirt. Each seed piece then had to be sewn onto the skirt using a sewing machine and she reckons it took her between three and four months to complete this task. She estimates the finished dress weighs about 5 kilos.

As you can see from the photos, it is a stunning dress and she is justifably proud of it. She is hoping that someone might find a way of turning the seeds into some sort of fibre so that it could be used for clothing purposes. She is intending to take up a career in nursing, but fashion design is a close second.





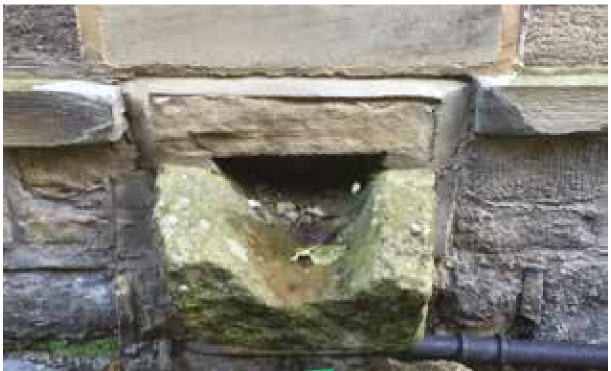


There is a short video showing her making and wearing the dress at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-australia-55141163

Or just Google 'Jessica Collins' and it will come up with loads more photos.

While Out Walking

By John Chandler



The Lant Spout *(photo Ruth Smalley)*

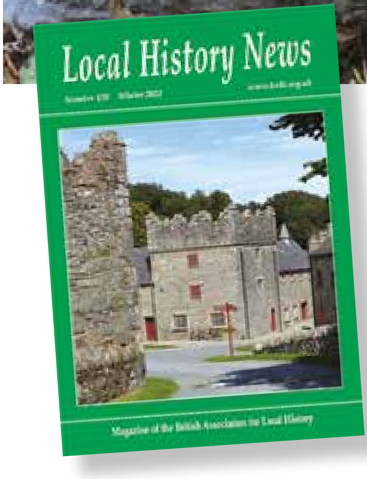
If the admirable Baildon Local History Society's village walk booklet hadn't pointed it out we would never have noticed this stone-lined hole in a farmhouse wall just above ground level, and certainly wouldn't have guessed what it is for. In Baildon (which is in West Yorkshire near Shipley) they call it a Lant Spout and it was used for passing urine (which they call the 'weetings') out of the building to drain into a tub. Why would anyone want to do that?

Stale urine was a valuable commodity for the softening and fulling of cloth, since it produced ammonia, an effective (if somewhat unpleasant) cleansing agent. In woollen manufacturing districts, therefore, it was routinely collected and stored ready for industrial use.

In the north this plentiful liquid was known as 'lant' but in the west country (where I have encountered reference to a similar practice) it was 'sig'. Householders were loaned a tub by the cloth factories. They were paid when they had filled it, and the contents were then collected and taken away in a barrel on wheels, a 'sig-dilly'.

Lant comes in various qualities. Methodist urine, Alan Crosby tells me, was preferred in Lancashire, because it had a low alcohol content. William Partridge, a Stroud clothier who emigrated to America and wrote a treatise on such matters in 1823, said that cider and gin drinkers were considered to give the worst and beer drinkers the best; though urine from persons on a plain diet was stronger and better than that from luxurious livers (if he meant it anatomically should that not be kidneys?). In Trowbridge, I was told, they preferred to collect 'morning urine' rather than that produced in the evenings outside pubs.

So that is the humble lant spout - I don't think it will make it into anyone's history of the world in 100 objects.



While Out Walking included here by kind permission of *Local History News*

‘Lockdown’ Mending

By Liz Booty

During all these lockdowns a lot of people have been reflecting on what fashion means to them and the term ‘slow fashion’ has entered into the vocabulary.

Our forebears were taught how to patch, darn and mend and during WW2 ‘ Make Do and Mend’ was the slogan. More recently some of the charity shops have been upcycling garments for resale.

During this pandemic many have taken to handicrafts as a means of keeping active and we are increasingly appreciating the value of hand sewing which sits comfortably in today’s eco awareness.

There are jackets or bedcovers of Kantha work perfected in India and Bangladesh where layers of cloth are stitched together by hand using a running stitch. I came across jackets and hanging cloths made from worn out saris and flour sacks when I was at the Architectural Venice Biennale in 2018 - high fashion with high prices, and very much part of today’s eco movement.

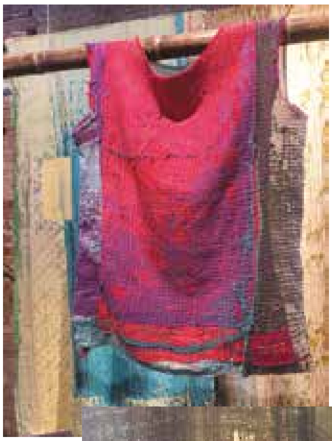
Closer to home old tweed jackets have been upcycled with maybe patches on the elbow or a new fabric stitched onto pocket flaps/ lapels etc.

> *‘Start where you are.*
> *Use what you have.*
> *Do what you can.’*
> Arthur Ashe

Everything seems to have been done to new jeans and now people are writing books about how to Patch, Mend and Darn to preserve worn, favourite clothing.

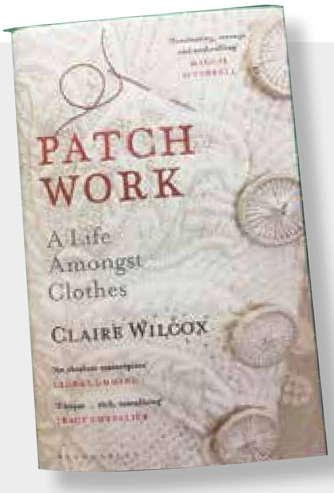
Recently I attended via Zoom a free workshop with Molly Martin from one of the series of workshops being offered by Toast. I have never prided myself on my hand sewing but found myself totally absorbed by learning how to mend a tear in denim using Sashiko type of hand stitching. It was very satisfying and relaxing so look out - you may well see me wearing patched, mended, darned clothes from now on!

Want to know more?
The Art of Repair by Molly Martin
Slow stitch by Claire Wellesley Smith
Mend and Patch by Kerstin Neumuller
Darning: Repair, Make, Mend by Hikaru Noguchi
Mending Matters - Stitch, Patch and Repair your favourite denim and More by Katrina Rodabaugh



Above: Old saris and flour sacks,
detail from Kantha work
Left: Kantha wallhanging

Below: Examples of upcycled jackets, one from an attendee at the Florence Colloquium



Patch Work

A Life Amongst Clothes

By Claire Wilcox
Bloomsbury Publishing HB £16.99.
ISBN 978-5266-1439-1
By Fiona Starkey

I’m not sure quite what I was expecting when handed this book to review - an instruction manual, a tale of life lived in the V&A?, but it wasn’t this.

Patch work has some glowing reviews: ‘Fascinating, strange and enthralling’ from Maggie O’Farrell, ‘An absolute masterpiece’ from Laura Cumming and ‘Unique... rich, tantalising’ from Tracy Chevalier.

Claire Wilcox has been senior curator of Fashion at the V&A since 2004, but this isn’t really about that. It’s written from a very personal point of view; less of a narrative, more a sequence of snapshots. It felt to me like looking through somebody’s life in photos filed in loose chronological order and reading the notes on the back; some with more explanation than others. Sometimes the ‘captions’ spark an earlier memory and you’re back in time for a different strand of the story.

It’s written mostly in the present tense and the chapters are short, sometimes only half a page and it’s very atmospheric in a quiet, unassuming almost apologetic sort of way. Much of it struck me as melancholy, particularly when she’s remembering the deaths of family members.

When taken separately these snippets from a life don’t necessarily mean much more than an interesting passing thought, but taken together they add up to a fuller picture, which is, I suppose what a patchwork is after all.

'Between the Islands' project update

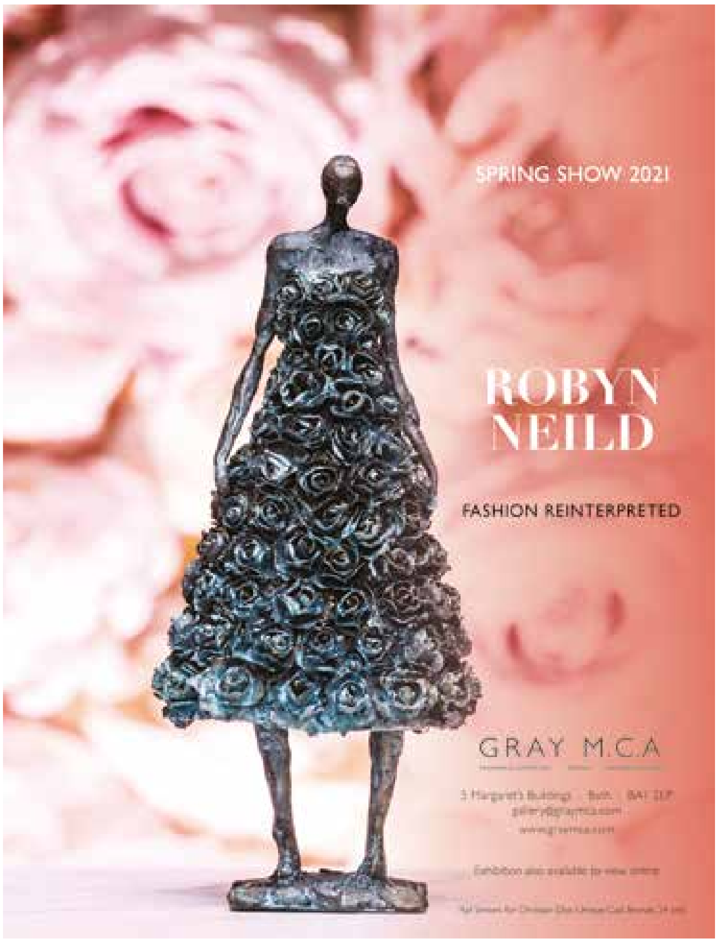
Rachel Boak writes: Following the article on the *Between Islands* project in the WECS Autumn 2020 *Wardrobe,* the online exhibitions for Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides have been launched.

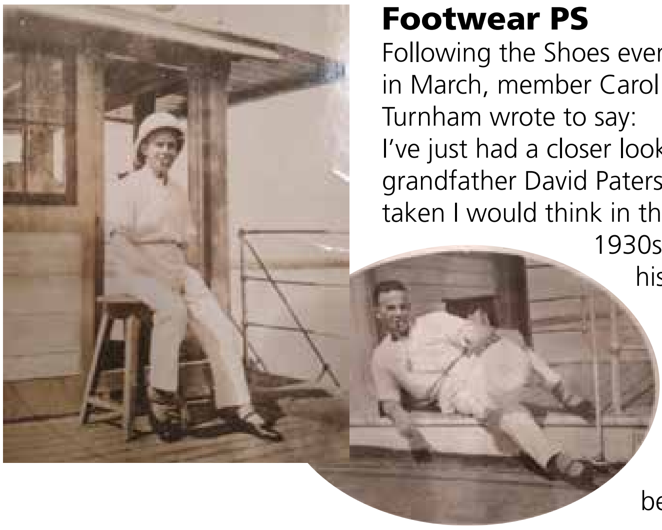
You will find information on Harris Tweed, Fair Isle knitting and other island textiles, artists and writers in the Orkney exhibition **https://orkneybetweenislands.wordpress.com/**

The Harris Tweed wedding dress and coat by Ann McCallum features in the Outer Hebrides exhibition **https://www.outerhebridesbetweenislands.co.uk/home**

The Shetland exhibition can be found at **https://shetland.betweenislands.com/**

I hope members enjoy browsing the exhibitions.

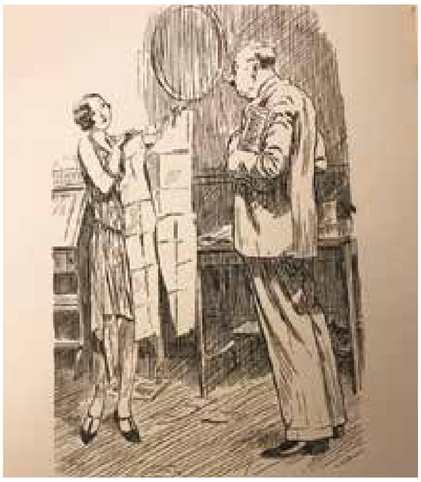




Footwear PS

Following the Shoes event in March, member Carol Turnham wrote to say:

I've just had a closer look at two photos of my grandfather David Paterson Snr, in India and taken I would think in the 1920s or very early 1930s. I just couldn't believe his shoes! Presumably they are the forerunner of sandals because of the heat out there, but an interesting style! Have you seen these before? Just for interest!



WIFE *(showing husband paper-pattern of frock)* "Look dear, this is the very latest thing from Paris."
HUSBAND: "Heavens! my dear, you *can't* wear that."

Keep *Wardrobe* full!

What have you been doing, reading, discovered online?
Write and tell us so we can share.

Copy for the next newsletter to Vibeke Ormerod by 30 June please

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