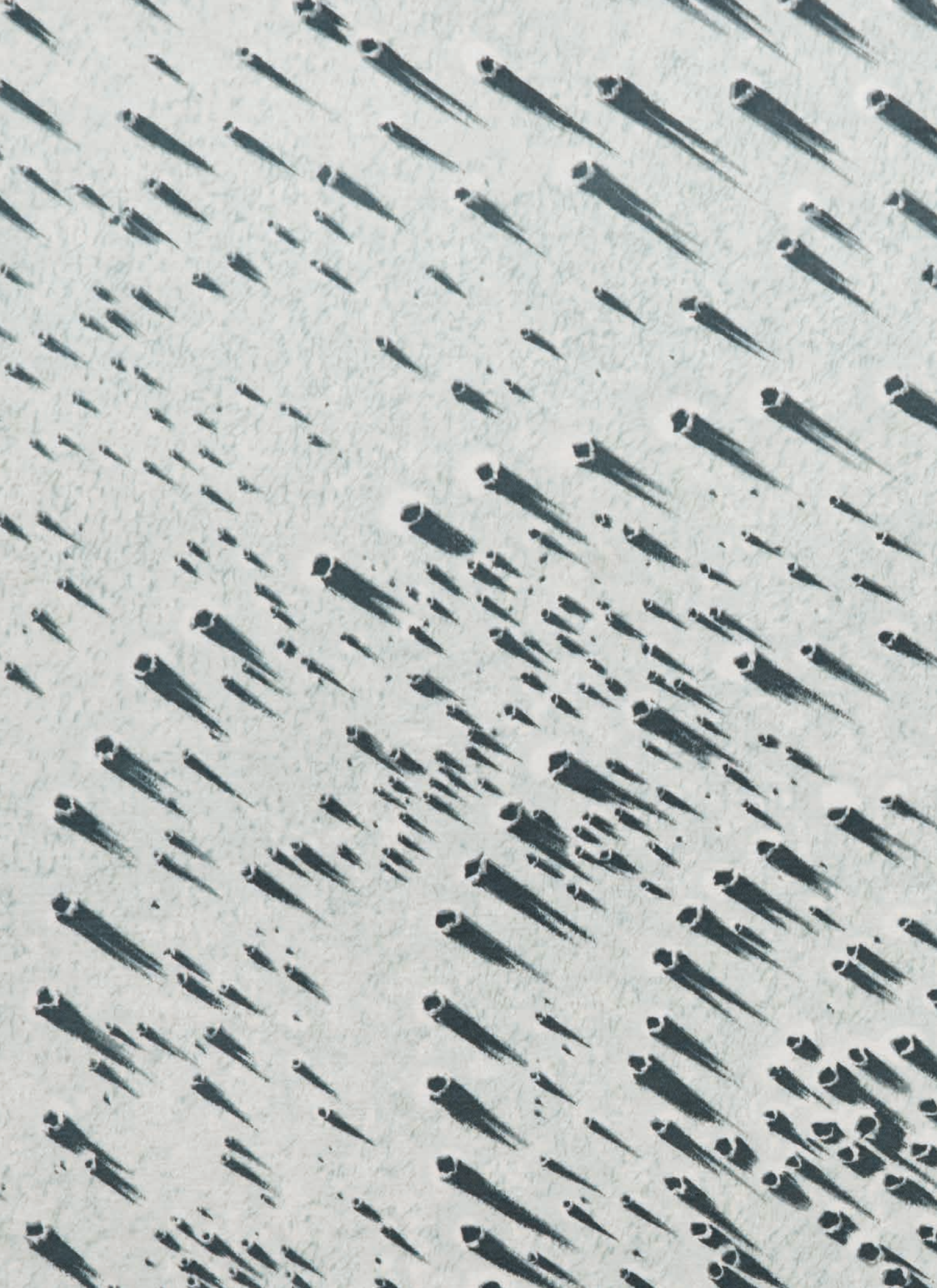


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LES JETS D'EAU
RAYON AND COTTON WALL COVERING BY
EDOUARD BÉNÉDICTUS FOR BRUNET-MEUNIÉ
French, 1925

Edouard Bénédicte (1878–1930) is known today primarily for his textile, wallpaper, and carpet designs. However, over the course of his prolific career spanning the first three decades of the twentieth century, from the Art Nouveau to the Art Deco movements, he was also a chemist, musician, composer, poet, critic, and theatrical costume designer. Born in Paris, Bénédicte entered the École des Arts Décoratifs in 1897 and, in 1900, he traveled to Darmstadt, Germany, to study chemistry, an interest that he continued to pursue after his return to Paris. Between 1900 and 1910, he worked primarily in *cuir incrusté* (inlaid leather), a technique for which he became well known; his panels and boxes featuring flowers, birds, and animals were regularly exhibited at the *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs*. He also provided the illustrations for a series of articles by the artist Maurice Verneuil for *Art et Décoration* on adapting motifs from nature for decorative purposes. Bénédicte's renderings of insects, reptiles, and butterflies reflect the sinuous, organic forms of the Art Nouveau style.

The 1920s represent the high point of Bénédicte's professional career in terms of his contribution to the Art Deco aesthetic and his public recognition. He produced gouaches with repeating patterns for large-format hand-colored pochoir albums: *Variations* (1924), *Nouvelles Variations* (1926), and *Relais* (published posthumously in 1930). These demonstrate both Bénédicte's mastery of flat pattern and his own progression from stylized, opulent floral forms in *Variations*, to more schematized naturalistic motifs in *Nouvelles Variations*, and, finally, overtly geometric and abstracted elements in *Relais*. Between 1923 and 1930, he collaborated with leading French textile manufacturers Tassinari et Chatel and Brunet-Meunié. Both firms commissioned *artistes décorateurs* to create avant-garde designs, and also introduced luxury furnishing textiles that incorporated rayon, the exciting, newly fashionable, synthetic fiber. Publications such as *Art et Décoration*, *La Soierie de Lyon*, *Mobilier et Décoration*, and *Les Arts Décoratifs Modernes* frequently illustrated Bénédicte's textiles during this period.

In 1925, Bénédicte's monumental wall covering, *Les Jets d'Eau* (Fountains), was selected for prominent inclusion at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris. It was conspicuously displayed in the *Grand Salon de Réception* at the *Ambassade Française*. Created by members of the *Société des Artistes Décorateurs*, a collective of well-known architects and interior designers, this series of rooms showcased high-end French taste and championed the supremacy and prestige of French design. Five views of the Grand Salon, published in a commemorative album in 1925, show *Les Jets d'Eau* installed on two long walls and in recesses at either side of the door. Bénédicte also designed the room's floral-patterned octagonal carpet, woven by the Aubusson manufactory.

Les Jets d'Eau's modernity is evident in the stylized drawing of its design elements and its use of glossy rayon pattern wefts. Abundant, tiered water fountains, interspersed with vertical bands of overlapping flowers, extend in offset rows across the full selvedge width of the panel. The composition's large scale, with a repeat of sixty-one and a half inches, enhances its architectonic impact. Employing just three colors—a brick red cotton warp and yellow and black wefts, Bénédicte achieved a visual complexity through different weave structures—satin, plain, and twill, as well as weft floats—that juxtapose shiny and matte surfaces, particularly in the flowers' dense geometric filling patterns. These oversized, flattened motifs, with their rounded petals and variegated centers, correspond to many of Bénédicte's gouaches for *Variations*. In the fountains, the lustrous golden yellow wefts convey the shimmering sparkle of water.

At the 1925 exhibition, cascading water was a dominant visual theme. At night, an illuminated waterfall transformed the Pont Alexandre III and a nearby fountain gushed into the sky. In addition to Bénédicte's textile that highlights the fountain, other decorative arts media represented the motif; an illustration of Gaëtan Jeannin's stained glass panel, also entitled *Le Jet d'Eau*, appeared on the June 1925 cover of *L'Illustration*. As design historian Tag Gronberg has noted, "the glittering jet d'eau" functioned "as a kind of identifying symbol for the Exhibition itself," which presented Paris "as an overflowing fountain" offering up a lavish display of consumer goods. Bénédicte's *Les Jets d'Eau* contributed to the exhibition's promotion of French luxury commodities in one of its most acclaimed venues.

Panels of *Les Jets d'Eau*, in the same colorway, are in the collections of the Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon (Inv. DET. 35) and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (25955), as well as a curtain in the Royal Ontario Museum (974.264). A panel in a different colorway is in the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (1990-29-2).

53.25" H x 49.75" W



LE DRAPEAU
WOOL PILE CARPET BY JOAN MIRÓ FOR MAISON MYRBOR
French/Algerian (woven in Sétif), ca. 1932–35

In 1925, Marie Cuttoli (1879–1973), founder of Maison Myrbor, was invited to display her fashions and carpets at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Cuttoli's rugs, woven in Algeria from designs by Jean Lurçat, were alluring for their exoticism—albeit colonialist and exploitative—but drew artistic praise for their pared-down modernist elegance. One critic called the exposition's "indigenous" carpets too vibrant and "oriental," but lauded "those showing a compromise with modern French trends," particularly Myrbor's. From this success, her business prospered in the following years and numerous artists, including Joan Miró (1893–1983) in the early 1930s, collaborated with Cuttoli.

Born in Tulle, a town near Aubusson known for textile production, Marie Bordes met her future husband, Algerian senator Paul Cuttoli, in 1913. The pair lived between France and Algeria, where her ideas on the arts were irrevocably affected. In Philippeville (modern day Skikda), the traditions of female weavers enthralled her. In Paris, she met members of the Parisian and Russian avant-garde, like Natalia Goncharova. Hoping to marry these two artistic worlds, Cuttoli registered her business, Myrbor, a portmanteau combining her maiden name with her Arabic name Myriam, in 1922. Inspired by the Atelier Martine and the Wiener Werkstätte to establish a workshop unifying the decorative arts, she produced fashions and accessories with Goncharova and others, and installed looms at her villa, later moving the operation to Sétif.

At the 1925 exposition, Cuttoli insisted her carpets be displayed vertically behind glass "so that collectors buy a Léger rug as they would a Léger painting," American photographer and Myrbor client Thérèse Bonney wrote in 1929. Following the exposition, Cuttoli opened a Paris showroom, Maison Myrbor, in 1926. Modern artists, including Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, Jean Arp, Louis Marcoussis, and Miró, created designs for Cuttoli, which were typically woven in editions of five, but sometimes as few as one. Shown at Cuttoli's Paris establishment as well as at Galerie Georges Bernheim (1928) and the Musée Galliera (1928), the carpets also received international attention with *Women's Wear* praising those displayed in a Bonwit Teller window, in August 1926, for their "modernistic adaptation in art." Exhibitions at the Chicago Art Club (1927), New York Art Center (1928), Lord & Taylor (1928), and John Becker Gallery (1930) followed. In 1935, Helena Rubinstein bought three for her New York apartment, and the following year, the Museum of Modern Art included three rugs in its exhibition on cubism.

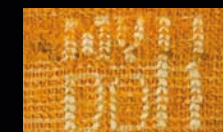
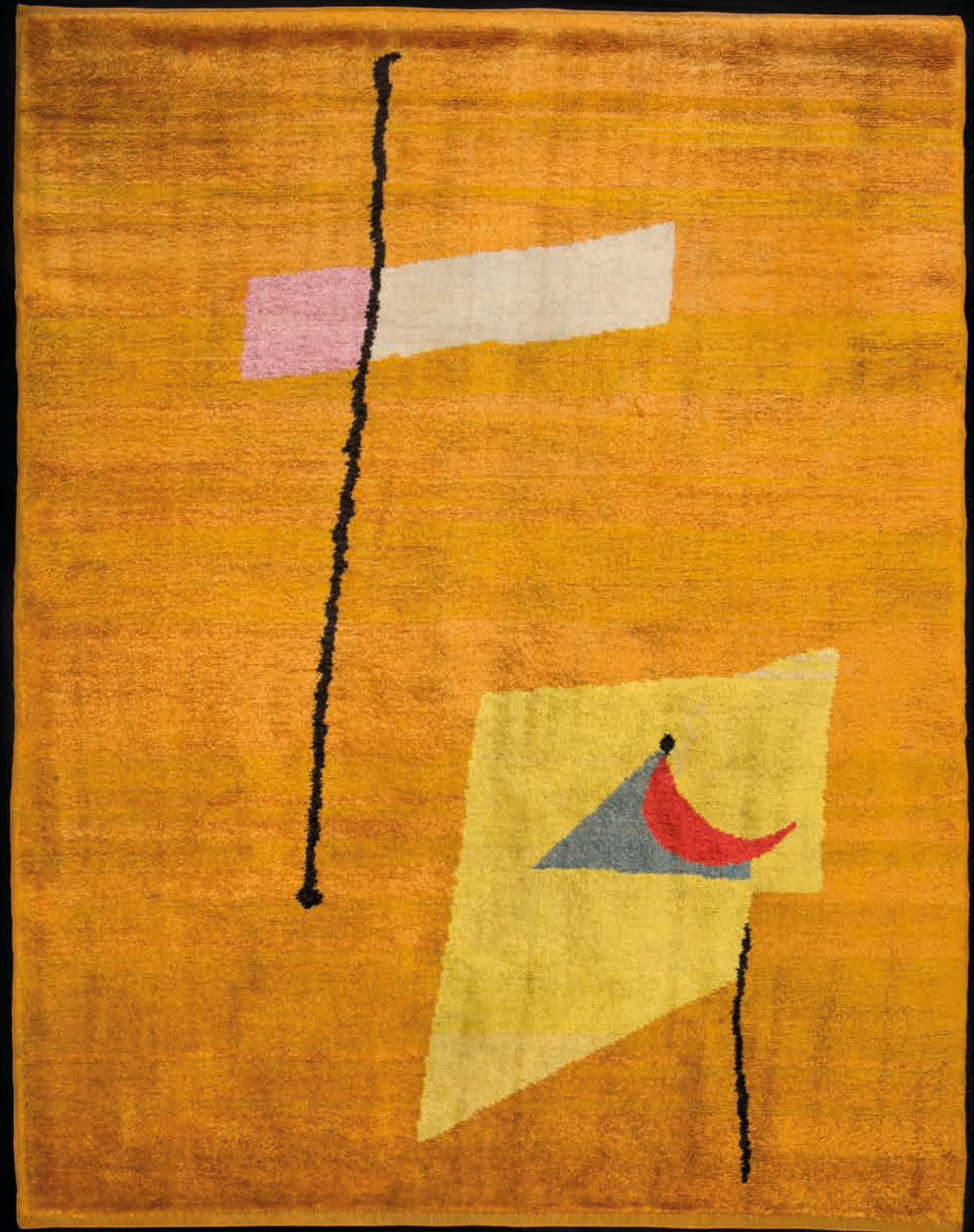
Le Drapeau (The Flag) is one of four known extant carpets by Miró executed in Sétif. Each rug, made of French rather than North African wool, would have had a unique appearance, given the hand-loomed technique and the variations in dyestuffs visible in the abrash. These striations are noticeable in *Le Drapeau's* ground color, which ebbs between mustard yellow and tan. The design depicts two abstracted flags, on brown flagpoles. Evidently it hung vertically at some point in its history, as Cuttoli would have wished it; a later thick linen band on the reverse would support a rod.

By 1928, Cuttoli began to shift her patronage from rug weaving to Aubusson and Beauvais tapestry. She renamed Maison Myrbor as Galerie Vignon, and, in 1935, founded Galerie Bucher-Myrbor with dealer Jeanne Bucher, where she still exhibited carpets but focused on fine art and tapestry. The precise date when Cuttoli ceased Sétif carpet production is unclear. Historians have proposed that Algerian rug production stopped by 1933, but a 1935 exhibition organized by the Algerian Office of Commerce and Touristic Action may suggest otherwise; an article in *L'Écho d'Alger* notes Myrbor contributed an "audacious" red rug with yellow and white borders "executed following the desires of one of our notorious patriots."

Likewise, the period of Miró's activity with Myrbor is difficult to pinpoint. *Le Drapeau's* oil sketch, today in a private collection, is tentatively dated to 1930, while other designs may be as late as 1934, when he was already producing cartoons to scale for Cuttoli's tapestry works. However, the exclusion of Miró's name from publicity for Myrbor rugs before 1932 suggests that he may have been the one of the last artists to provide carpet designs for the firm.

Although the Algerian venture was short lived, Cuttoli's rugs were considered at the time as "her most important contribution to the modern movement," as Bonney noted. This statement is bolstered by her return to carpet production near the end of her life when she reissued designs, including *Le Drapeau*, with Galerie Lucie Weill. Cuttoli's early decision to enlist artists as designers for rugs is a testament to her thoroughly modern, even prescient, understanding of the symbiotic relationship between art and craft, which became central to her French tapestry projects.

73" H x 58" W



THREE DRESSES MADE FROM PRINTED LINENS BY RUTH REEVES
American (New York), 1930s–1940s



PLAY BOY DRESS
Designed 1930

Ruth Reeves (1892–1966) was perhaps the most well-known female industrial designer of the 1930s. Born in California, she studied at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute and the Art Student's League before coming under the influence of M. D. C. Crawford, design editor of *Women's Wear*, and Stewart C. Culin, curator of ethnology at the Brooklyn Museum, mentors who endorsed the study of museum specimens to generate a characteristically American design idiom. Reeves trained in the early 1920s as a painter under Fernand Léger in Paris, before returning to America, in 1927, where she worked with Donald Deskey, Paul Frankl, Henry Varnum Poor, and Ilonka Karasz to win over American consumers skeptical of European modernism. She exhibited with, and was a member of, the American Designers' Gallery, the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC), and the National Alliance of Art and Industry.

This group of three dresses constructed out of textiles designed by Reeves—the only known such garments—exemplifies her deft assimilation of European modernism, Americana, and primitivism during her most fruitful period. The makers of these fitted sheaths took care not to disrupt the rhythm of Reeves's bold patterns, shaping each with unobtrusive princess seams through the waists, and presenting the textiles in a straightforward manner with minimally invasive, if sometimes inventive, tailoring.

The silhouette of the dress made from *Play Boy* (sometimes written *Play-boy* or *Playboy*)—fitted and feminine, with a narrow standing collar extending into a placket at the neck closing with mango-yellow Bakelite buttons—is a clever contrast to the overt machismo of the print. Utilizing a strip of fabric seamlessly inserted over the right leg, the maker created a flap that produces the illusion of a wrapping skirt, introduced ease at the hem, and disguised a self-lined pocket at the hip. Depicting sporting events and games—tennis, golf, horseback riding, fencing, fishing, hunting—*Play Boy* was one of several designs commissioned in 1930 by W. and J. Sloane, whose catalogue described it as, "American sports, in stylized figures against a background of motifs from African hunting shields." The manufacturer hailed its suitability for a variety of masculine spaces including trophy rooms, boys' dorms, gymnasiums, and cocktail bars—but, unsurprisingly, not for women's dress.

Circus, befitting its name, was one of Reeves's most well-traveled patterns, appearing at exhibitions from the 1930s through 1950. Inspired by the textiles of Raoul Dufy, Reeves included acrobats, a lion tamer, a horse dancer, the ring leader, and spectators, each suspended in vigorous movement. *Circus* debuted at the Brooklyn Museum in the summer of 1931 as part of an AUDAC exhibition of its members' work. "Miss Reeves has set a new standard in modern drapery design and use of material," noted *Good Furniture and Decoration*, calling *Circus* a "striking drapery fabric [that] will be of never failing of interest to children especially." Though it made an excellent exhibition piece, it appears not to have gone into general production until the New York firm Morley-Fletcher reissued it in 1947.

In 1934, Reeves received a grant to travel to Guatemala, where she studied weaving and embroidery, collected costume, and designed textiles based on indigenous objects. The following year, visitors to Rockefeller Center could see a tapestry-woven headband from the village of Totonicapan and Reeves's eponymous textile, described as suitable "for a child's room." Reeves magnified the headband's small motifs of bird, gazelle, a human couple, and geometric forms. She made clear that she had merely sought inspiration in Guatemalan textiles, telling *Design*, "These native fabrics have their own validity in terms of the people and background which produced them, and for a designer to adapt such patterns verbatim would only result in a sterile and unmeaning performance." The print was adapted, in 1936, for table linens by Edmond Dewan Co. under the title *Melodia*, and reissued by Morley-Fletcher in about 1947, as *Guatemalan Document* (see Cora Ginsburg catalogue Winter 2007).

The construction is particularly sophisticated in the dress sewn from *Totonicapan*, rendered in pink and brown on fine white linen, with functional mother-of-pearl buttons at each shoulder, matching curved pockets at each hip, and graduated box pleats at either side of the front hem. As the wearer walked, her legs would reveal elements of the pattern concealed by the pleats, further animating the design.

Although she drew thousands of costume sketches as an illustrator at *Women's Wear* in the 1910s, Reeves never designed full-scale garments. However, during the Depression, several textile manufacturers and associations used clothing made from their latest fabrics, including those by Reeves, as promotional tools to spark usages beyond upholstery. In 1931 and 1932, the Cotton-Textile Institute sponsored fashion shows at several midwestern schools incorporating textiles designed by Reeves. "High school girls acted as models to demonstrate the costumes in the show," reported *Women's Wear Daily* of the Kansas City "style show," singling out *Play Boy* as one well-received design. Dewan's 1936 catalogue also featured models in garments of textiles designed by Reeves and Marguerita Mergentime, "novelties" that it predicted would inspire "ingenious needlewomen." It is unknown if these three dresses were created as similar promotional tools, or if they are the result of adventurous home sewers.

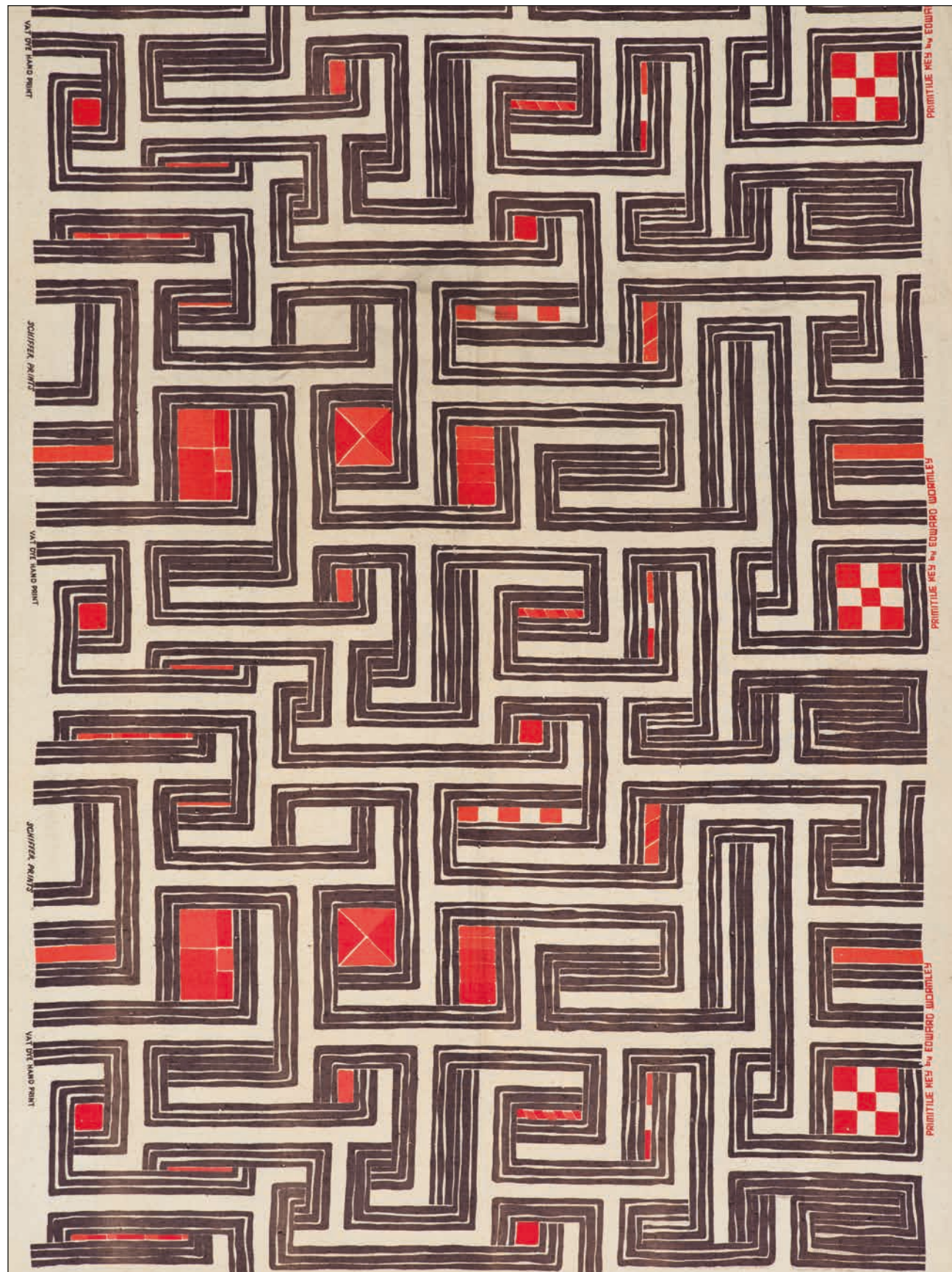
Two documents of *Play Boy* on monk's cloth are in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (276-1932 and 267-1932); another length is in the Goldstein Gallery at the University of Minnesota (1980.012.027). A panel of *Circus* in blue printed by Morley-Fletcher ca. 1947 is in the Indianapolis Museum of Art (48.32). A panel of Morley-Fletcher's *Guatemalan Document* is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2008-215-1).



CIRCUS DRESS
Designed 1931



TOTONICAPAN DRESS
Designed 1935



PRIMITIVE KEY
 VAT-DYED RAYON AND COTTON CURTAIN BY EDWARD WORMLEY FOR SCHIFFER PRINTS
 American (New York), 1949

During the period immediately following World War II, there began a unique chapter in the American fabric industry.

—Alvin Lustig, “Modern Printed Fabrics”
American Fabrics, Winter 1951–52

Lustig’s insightful essay opens with this fairy-tale-esque observation and continues on to examine new directions in design and consumer tastes at the time. Among the textiles he championed was Schiffer Prints’ 1949 “Stimulus” line—“perhaps the most outstanding *name* collection”—which featured patterns by seven diverse talents, none of whom were professional textile designers. The roster included Salvador Dalí, architect/designers George Nelson and Abel Sorenson, polymath curator/designer/critic Bernard Rudofsky, “sculptress” Ray Eames, and furniture/industrial designers Paul McCobb and Edward Wormley.

Wormley (1907–1995) had nearly twenty years’ experience in the field of furniture and interior design by the time he participated in the “Stimulus” project, and his prints came with an appropriate understanding of their functions in modern spaces. A native of Illinois, and a School of the Art Institute of Chicago alumnus (1926–28), Wormley worked for the Marshall Field & Company interior design studio, in Chicago, and then at Berkey & Gay, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1931, the Dunbar Furniture Corporation of Indiana recruited him to modernize its economy line. Wormley excelled in simplified silhouettes that did not abruptly break with historic precedents, but combined prevailing modernist themes with the lasting appeal of antiques; in his own words this was an approach of “re-searching and a fresh appreciation of the past.” During the war years, Wormley headed the Furniture Unit of the Office of Price Administration in Washington, D.C.; afterwards, he returned to Dunbar (where he would continue as design director for the next twenty years), and also worked on projects from his New York office. It was at this fertile postwar juncture that he was approached for the “Stimulus” collection.

Schiffer Prints, a division of Milton Schiffer’s Mil-Art Company, Inc., secured the copyright for Wormley’s *Primitive Key* (GU12805) on June 20, 1949. Described as an “angular maze-like design containing squares and rectangles,” the title overtly references the key fret pattern, an ancient Greek decorative device yet Wormley’s inspiration seems closer to compositions evident in African Kuba textiles: panels of woven palm fiber with geometric, raffia-embroidered designs executed in a limited palette of tan and brown. His interpretation dovetails with modernist designers’ appreciation for non-Western (and, in the artistic parlance of the period, “primitive”) art forms. Here, meandering mahogany bands are heightened by brilliant red and orange mosaics, checkerboards, slivers, and angled bands; superimposed on a flax-colored ground, the Kuba relationship is marked. Printed on weft-faced twill with cotton warps and spun rayon wefts (the more lustrous, irregularly slubbed wefts imparting a “raw silk” appearance), *Primitive Key* captures the culturally transcendent power of “good design.”

When the “Stimulus” collection was on public display at the Architectural League, in 1947, the *New York Times*, a vanguard of “good design” critique, reported on the strong character of Wormley’s patterns. “6 Artists Turn Out Brilliant Group of Fabric Prints in Modern Style” lauded the “top flight” talent of the “Stimulus” designers, deeming five of Wormley’s six designs “highly adaptable for covering furniture, particularly furniture with the rich but simple elegance that marks his own pieces.” A second *New York Times* article, “Printed Fabrics: Primary News is the Decided Advance in Quality of Their Draftsmanship,” concluded, “The abstract print has reached a maturity that can command respect from all.” Directly below this statement is a photograph captioned, “Stimulus fabric by Wormley,” depicting a curtain made from *Primitive Key*.

This panel bears a typewritten and handwritten paper tag stating the pattern’s title, artist’s name, manufacturer, textile width and repeat, as well as numbers most likely specifying the colorway and ground fabric (antique satin). Additional notations place it in Chicago: 840 North Michigan Avenue is crossed out and replaced in ink with 1314 Merchandise Mart, indicating a wholesaler’s showroom within the to-the-trade shopping mecca. The Merchandise Mart gave tours to satisfy the growing national interest in styling interiors, and, in 1949, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, announced a joint program with the Mart of public exhibitions, called *Good Design*, in which selections of the best home furnishings would be displayed at both venues. It is possible that this example of *Primitive Key* was shown at the Mart simultaneously with the first *Good Design* exhibition in January 1950.

Primitive Key is illustrated in William J. Hennessey, *Modern Furnishings for the Home*, 1952, p. 267.

108” H x 47.5” W (detail)

OVALS, OVALS #1, AND OVALS #2
PRINTED LINENS BY A. JOEL ROBINSON FOR L. ANTON MAIX FABRICS
American (New York), 1951–52

From November 28, 1951, through January 27, 1952, visitors to the Museum of Modern Art flocked to the second annual *Good Design* exhibition, where designer A. Joel Robinson's *Ovals* was featured prominently in a display of the best new American furnishing fabrics. The museum's press release called *Ovals* "a fascinating essay in graded proportions," but neglected to mention the design's other groundbreaking aspect: the fact that Robinson was the first (and only known) African American designer selected for inclusion in these influential exhibitions. However, publications geared toward black readers leapt upon Robinson's accolade, with *Jet* hailing him as "the first Negro ever to receive the award."

Printed on Maix Fabrics's luxurious signature Belgian linen, these three sample panels represent Robinson's full array of variations on the theme of ovals. A deceptively simple design that cleverly echoes an architect's stencil, the original *Ovals* (which retailed for the high price of \$9 per yard from Bloomingdale's) depicts horizontal bands of alternating opaque and linear elliptical forms that gradually increase in size toward the center of the panel width, overlapping as they approach their maximum size. When hung as a curtain or draped wall panel, as shown in the *Good Design* exhibition in a setting designed by Finn Juhl, soft ripples enhanced its dynamic effect. Robinson reprised his success in the 1952 *Good Design* exhibition with *Ovals #1*, creating a sense of rhythm by varying solid and voided ovals of progressive size in rows. In 1955, a retrospective celebrating the first five years of *Good Design* featured *Ovals #1* again, the last documented appearance of Robinson's work at an exhibition. *Ovals #2* is an even lighter iteration, entirely devoid of solid forms.

Maix chose *Ovals* as the background for a 1951 advertisement in *Interiors* celebrating MoMA's stamp of approval of his firm's debut collection of printed fabrics called "America Designs." In *American Fabrics*, Alvin Lustig noted that for this collection Maix had "sought far afield from the usual fabric designers . . . in his efforts to develop freshness."

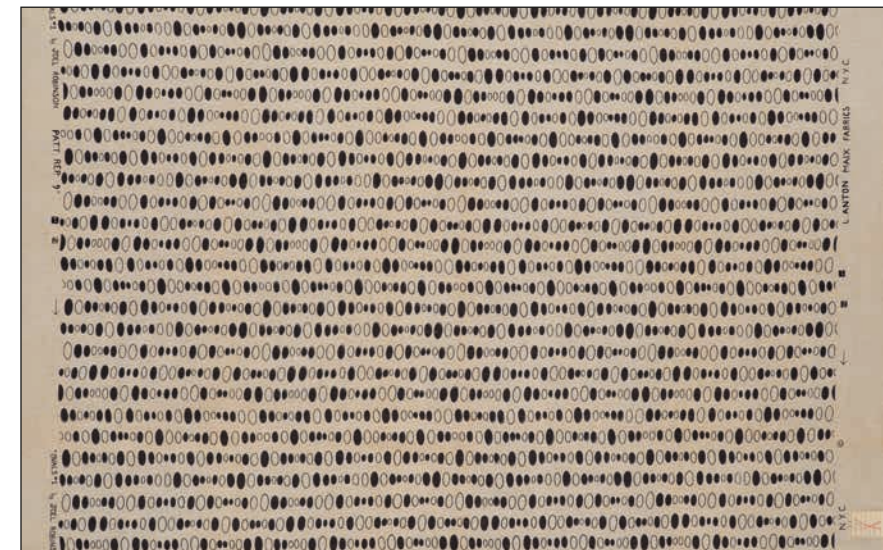
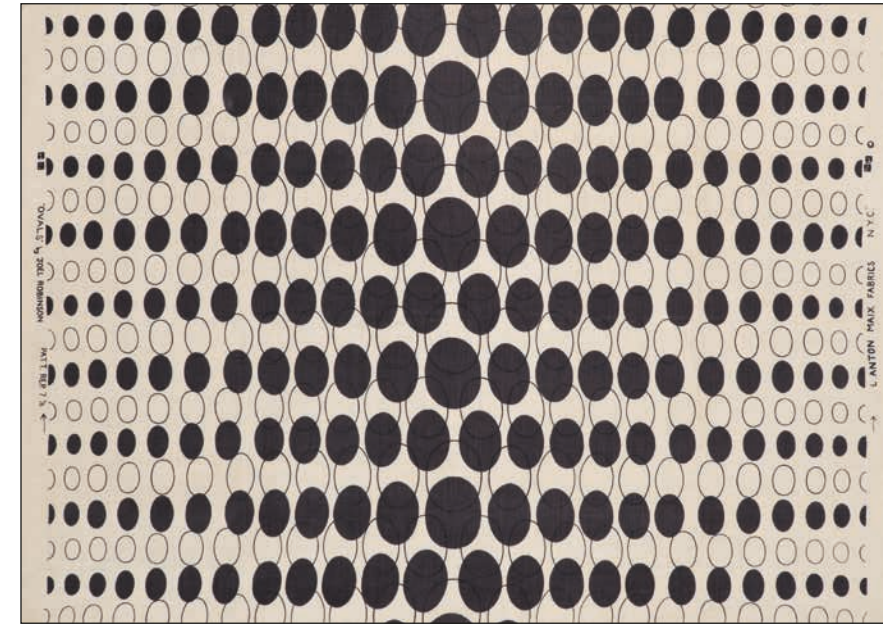
Lawrence Anton Maix strove for the very best quality in manufacturing and design from the beginning of his career. After attending the Art Students' League and working for the Modernage Furniture Company and Berkey Gay, he was hired by Hans Knoll, in about 1938, with whom he worked to build his company in its early years. In 1948, Maix formed his own firm, L. Anton Maix Fabrics, but also worked for companies like Schiffer Prints, curating their landmark 1949 "Stimulus" line. Maix's printer later recalled that his designers were "struggling artists" who Maix "picked up in Greenwich Village" and paid twenty-five dollars a design plus a small share of royalties. Robinson, referred to as an "ex-bellhop" in *Ebony*, must have been one of these artists in whom Maix saw great potential.

The success of *Ovals* was a harbinger of Robinson's ambitious artistic and professional goals. A 1952 feature in *Ebony* announced that he "does not like to be limited to any one art field despite his success in fabric," and noted that he designed magazine and book covers, prefabricated furniture, and had written and illustrated a children's book. Moreover, he had "worked out a new unique process of kaleidoscopic printing of fabrics which some claim will revolutionize the textile industry." Later that year, the magazine named the twenty-nine-year-old one of its most eligible "wealthy bachelors." Beyond his association with Maix, firm evidence of Robinson's design output is limited. He is likely the A. Joel Robinson who created sheet music covers in the 1940s, such as "A Gal in Calico" for the Remick Music Corp (1946). He also probably designed the spare, elegant look of the short-lived progressive literary journal *The Contemporary Reader* (1953–55), edited by Benjamin Brown, former head of *The Harlem Quarterly*, and staffed by a volunteer corps of liberal-minded, mainly African American intellectuals. In 1954, he was promoted from creative art director to executive vice president of the David D. Polon Advertising Agency, a small New York firm. Robinson's other textiles for Maix included *Glen Plaid*, *Honeycomb*, and *Roman Candles*, all produced ca. 1952.

Samples of *Ovals* are in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (CIRC.563-1954), the Art Institute of Chicago (1999.573), and the Cleveland Museum of Art (2012.91 and 2012.92). A sample of *Ovals #1* is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art (501.1975).

Ovals appears in William J. Hennessey, *Modern Furnishings for the Home*, 1952, p. 271.

Ovals: 35" H x 50" W
Ovals #1: 34" H x 52.75" W
Ovals #2: 34" H x 50" W





LEAF HANDS
VAT-DYED COTTON BY SALVADOR DALÍ FOR SCHIFFER PRINTS
American (New York), 1949

Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) and textile design go together hand in glove—a detached hand in a Schiaparelli glove, that is. His 1937–38 forays into fashion with the provocative couturière resulted in an organza dress painted with a giant, cooked lobster garnished with sprigs of parsley, and an evening gown printed to look as if torn. This collaboration enhanced the Spanish surrealist’s fame as an artistic enfant terrible, and unexpectedly paved his way for successful fabric collaborations with American firms. *Leaf Hands*—unmistakably Dalí in subject and style—was one of several patterns commissioned by Schiffer Prints as part of the “Stimulus” furnishing textiles collection. His esoteric designs contrast starkly with those of the line’s other contributors, adding a dash of painterly eccentricity to an otherwise earnest endeavor of modernist design. As a Schiffer advertisement noted for the collection’s debut, “Technique is synonymous with the name of Salvador Dalí.”

In 1946, Dalí assembled a portfolio of prints for apparel-weight rayon textiles and square silk scarves for Wesley Simpson’s “Artist’s Series.” This high-profile venture must have caught the attention of Milton Schiffer or, more likely, Lawrence Anton Maix, founder of the L. Anton Maix firm and Schiffer’s exclusive national distributing agent. Maix, who became a powerhouse textile entrepreneur in his own right, was probably the driving force behind the “Stimulus” concept. Maix debuted his own, well-rounded collection by named designers soon after, and Mil-Art (which had not previously released modernist textiles) never produced another collection matching the caliber or esprit of “Stimulus” again. Maix’s involvement in this project made him a catalyst for postwar trends in textiles by prestigious artists, and secured Schiffer’s status within this niche.

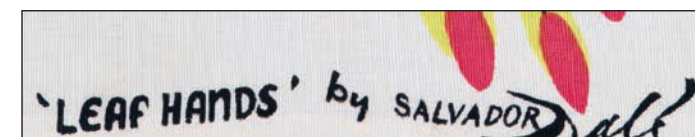
Surprisingly, the *St. Petersburg Times* article, “Women’s Work: Dalí Designs on Fabric Available for Homes,” described *Leaf Hands* as one of two “delicate patterns which would fit into a simple living room” and a “graceful” design. It was rendered in at least two colorways: one with pale yellow hands and green nails, and this version with rosy-red varnished nails decorating the attenuated fingers of chartreuse hands. Branching brown lines denote an ambiguously human/vegetal vascular system, while a jagged cracked-earth motif provides the vaguest suggestion of landscape. The creamy ribbed cotton ground provided the perfect canvas for the vat dye process Schiffer employed, a method considered to have the highest degree of fastness and the widest range of clear, bright colors. Vat dyeing is not a direct dyeing process; rather, it depends on a complex series of chemical reactions, achieved via screen-printing an insoluble paste onto the textile, reducing this application via exposure to certain agents, then fixing the pattern through immersion in specially prepared dyebaths, and, finally, finishing with an oxidization aftertreatment.

Assuming the “Stimulus” collection was in progress for at least a year before its launch in 1949, *Leaf Hands* was conceived of while Dalí and his wife, Gala, lived in New York (where the couple had retreated in 1940, leaving in 1948 after the war had subsided). This startling design of disembodied—and metamorphically inhuman—atomic parts reflects one of Dalí’s oeuvre-spanning fascinations, a theme preoccupying his imagination at that moment. Schiffer registered a copyright for *Leaf Hands* on July 6, 1949 (GU13131); within months, copyrights were also obtained by jewelers Alemany & Ertman for a clip in the form of a “large, veined hand with two smaller hands attached to wrist stem” and also a “pin representing [a] hand fashioned as a leaf.” Watercolor sketches and known examples of these jewels document feminine golden hands with raised veins mirroring the textile motifs, right down to the ruby cabochon talons.

Though intended for furnishings, some of the “Stimulus” fabrics migrated into women’s fashions: Ciro Sportswear used Dalí’s designs for what must have been eye-catching garments. As for their place in interior schemes, the article “Women’s Work” considered this response to incredulity: “If the guests don’t believe Salvador Dalí designed the new slipcovers . . . just rip a seam and prove it”—as the artist’s inimitable signature is emblazoned on the selvedge. Shocking and bold, yet hinting at transient fragility, *Leaf Hands* was Dalí’s humorously terrifying answer to what modern homes needed—though he also quipped, “Don’t bother about being modern. Unfortunately it is the one thing that, whatever you do, you cannot avoid.”

A panel of *Leaf Hands* is in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Montreal (D86.170.1a) and is illustrated in *Design 1935-1965: What Modern Was*, 1995, pp. 268–69.

108” H x 48.5” W



TRAINS
SCREEN-PRINTED COTTON BY SAUL STEINBERG FOR PATTERSON FABRICS
American (New York), 1949

Ornate flourishes, byzantine structures, exaggeratedly humorous personages and contraptions: these traits, bound by a masterful economy of line, shout Saul Steinberg (1914–1999). Described in his *New York Times* obituary as an “epic doodler” and by the *New Yorker* (his most enduring patron) as a “sophisticated commentator on the nature of modernism,” Romanian-born Steinberg burst onto the American art scene in the early 1940s, quickly absorbing New York’s high/low cultural milieu. While some classified his work strictly as comics or caricatures, others admired his satirical art, reckoned “with an eye like an insane X-ray machine.” Steinberg’s ambitions stretched to popular artforms, such as films and theatrical scenography; it is not surprising that he also dabbled in the worlds of fashion and interior design.

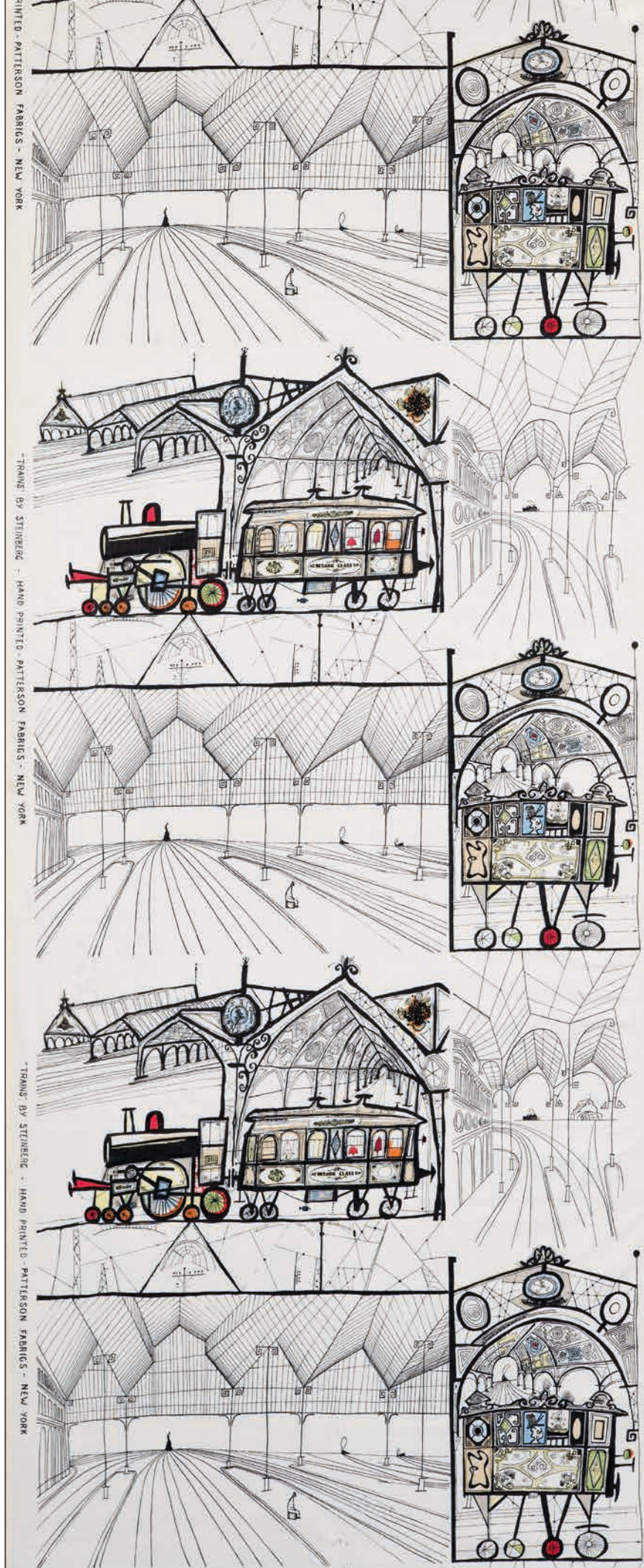
In 1947, Steinberg worked with Patterson Fabrics executive Harvey Smith to adapt his designs for textiles and wallpapers with the cooperation of the Piazza company (Patterson’s affiliate, run by Benjamin Piazza, which had started the collaboration in 1946). Steinberg’s *Views of Paris* scarf landed on a prized *Harper’s Bazaar* cover in March 1947, and Piazza produced *Trains* as a scarf in which a single pattern unit—a Victorianiana illustration of passenger locomotives sheltered in wrought-iron, glass-ceilinged stations—fills the white square. Piazza also turned this building block into a fanciful wallpaper, while Patterson hand screen-printed the same repeating design onto cotton yardage. Peppared with color, the pattern’s inky linework preserves the qualities of the artist’s original drawings. Compactly arranged, horizontal scenes are stacked in rhythmic balance, placing the more dense, colorful motifs over/under sparsely drawn formations that play with conventional linear perspective.

Though his cartoonist style would have been adaptable by a skilled textile artist, Steinberg’s textile layouts are mostly squares of consolidated motifs organized in registers—proof that his understanding of straight repeat requirements was intuitive. It is difficult to know whether the scarf or yardage was produced first, though clues are found in its introduction to the marketplace as a “chintz” curtain fabric featured in MoMA’s *Design Show: Christmas 1949* and further highlighted in a *New York Times* exhibition review as “a facetious rendering of travelers by Saul Steinberg, cartoonist” and praised as “outstanding.” As preserved in this example, “chintz” refers to the cotton’s lustrous surface, treated with resins during finishing; developed during the war, glazes made cottons sleek and soil-resistant, minimizing laundering needs while maintaining polish. In spring 1950, *American Fabrics* put a portion of *Trains* on its cover, noting it was to be manufactured as drapery fabric by Patterson.

Smith’s correspondence with Steinberg records some of the pitfalls of working with a high-profile artist in a commercial venture. Reprimands for offering designs to furnishing competitors were prompted by a customer’s request for “a new Steinberg pattern of policemen . . . a design done for the other house,” in this case, rival manufacturer Greef. Smith was not entirely averse to Steinberg submitting his quirky patterns to apparel fabric converters as sales were not in conflict with Patterson’s or Piazza’s objectives. But Smith cautioned that any proliferation “would almost certainly cheapen” Steinberg’s name, hastening a public decline in interest. He likely did not follow this advice: a number of Steinbergian border prints (intended for skirts) are documented, and, in lesser hands, suffered in adaptation. None have the finesse or fidelity of the goods produced by Patterson; in particular, a derivative design known as *Paddington Station*, a reconstitution of *Trains*, lacks the whimsical charm of Steinberg’s first effort. “Matching Wall and Pillows,” a photo-illustrated feature in the *Los Angeles Times*, in January 1959, shows *Trains*, marketed with the title *Train Scene*, and is a testament to the pattern’s longevity.

All known versions of *Trains* (scarf: 1968-135-90; wallpaper: 1950-126-3-a/c; and yard-goods: 1956-176-2 and 1958-153-1), as well as a related drawing also called *Trains* (1956-126-2), are in the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum collection. Several of these were donated by Smith and Piazza.

108” H x 36” W



LEAVES OF GRASS
 PRINTED SILK BY MARION DORN
 American (New York), 1947

San Francisco-born and Stanford-trained designer Marion Dorn (1896–1964) is best known for the work she produced in her adopted city of London, where she moved, with Edward McKnight Kauffer, in 1923. While situated in the U.K., from the time of her arrival and throughout the 1930s, Dorn made her mark working for private clients and manufacturers, primarily designing carpets and rugs well suited for modern interiors. By 1934, she had established her own company, Marion Dorn Limited. Wartime concerns led Dorn and Kauffer to return, in 1940, to the United States. Uprooted from her successes abroad, Dorn settled in New York City, bringing her considerable reputation with her. *Leaves of Grass* represents the continuation of Dorn’s talents in this American period of her career.

For a brief time prior to moving to London, Dorn participated in New York’s industrial arts scene, crafting batiks and printed textiles. In the early 1920s, Dorn, along with Ruth Reeves and Ilonka Karasz, participated in the *Women’s Wear* textile design competitions. Her work from these years was included in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 1920 *American Industrial Art* exhibition. Upon landing in London, attention to Dorn’s output continued: batiks, as well as rugs, were illustrated in *Vogue* in the mid-1920s and numerous commissions followed. In 1933, Dorn contributed a geometric rug, with pile of various heights in two tones of cream, to Syrie Maugham’s iconic, all-white London sitting room. She designed carpets and textiles for Claridge’s and other hotels, for restaurants and universities, as well as for ships including the *Queen Mary*.

During Dorn’s return stint as a designer in New York, from 1940 through the early 1960s, she worked freelance producing rug, textile, and wallpaper patterns for firms including Jofa, A. H. Lee, Edward Fields, Inc., F. Schumacher and Company, Goodall, Greeff, as well as Silkar Studios, which manufactured Dorn’s *Leaves of Grass* (also called *Ferns and Grasses*). This fabric, printed in silk and also in a washable, plastic-coated cotton named Gaytex, was used by T. H. Robsjohn Gibbings to upholster one of his sofas. In December 1946, the *New York Times* reported on another piece of furniture upholstered in *Leaves of Grass* noting that “it is covered with a new print by Marion Dorn—an uncommonly nice one with motifs of cereals and grasses in several shades of green on a white ground,” adding that the fabric an also be used for “draperies, bedspreads or covering another chair.”

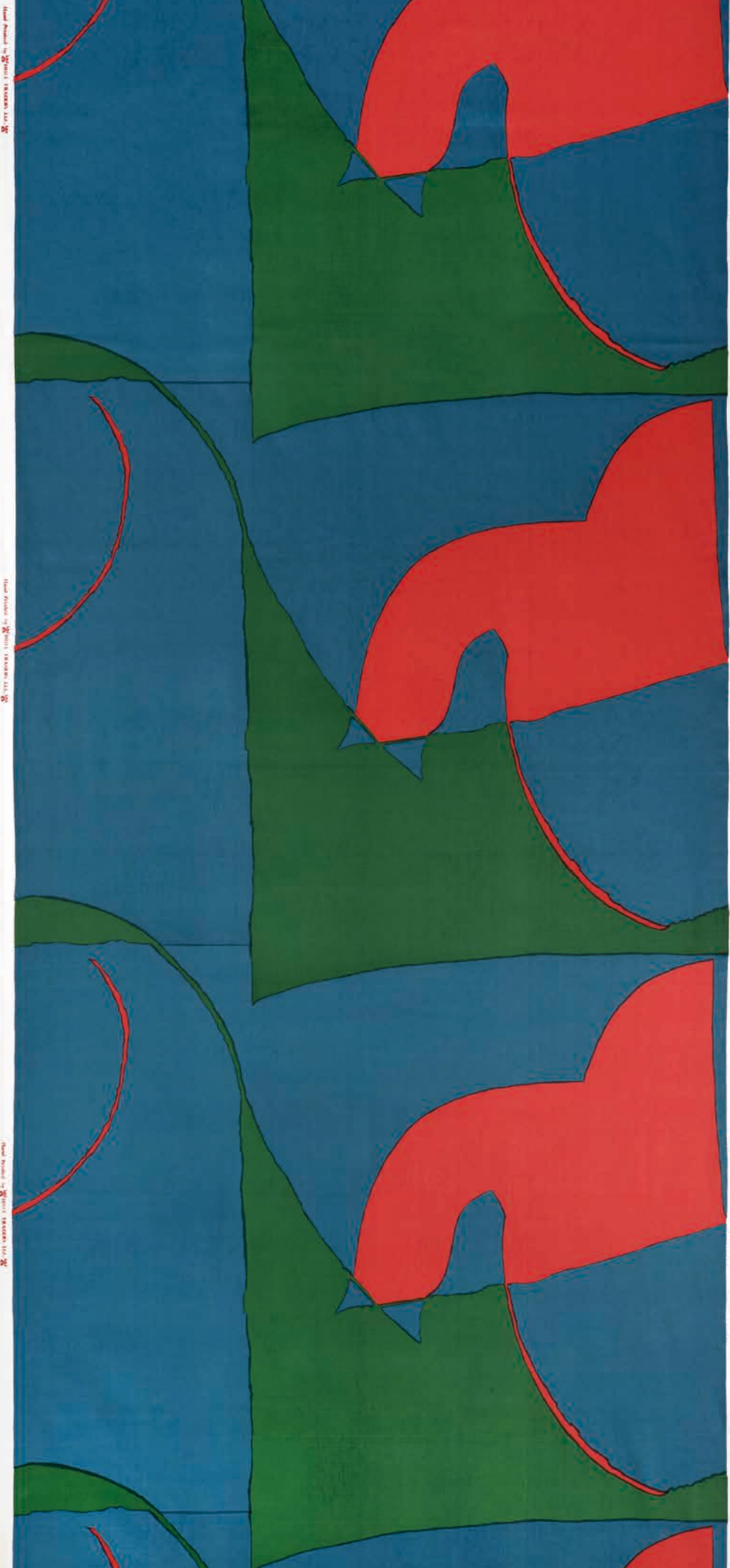
Dorn remained in demand throughout the 1950s with journals, newspapers, and books giving attention to her New York works. In 1952, the graphic arts magazine *Print* stated, “In all of her designs, Marion Dorn displays a unique talent for capturing essential qualities and presenting them straightforwardly in a beautifully balanced composition.” And, in 1956, *Interiors* promoted Dorn’s textiles as “a small, characterful group of casement fabrics . . . particularly apt for offices and institutions.”

Christine Boydell, author of *The Architect of Floors: Modernism, Art, and Marion Dorn Designs*, wrote this tribute to Dorn’s full career: “At the heart of her success was her ability to draw on the European avant-garde in painting while simultaneously exploiting the commercial possibilities of her work. She led the way in re-evaluating the status of textiles in the interior and her approach to design resulted in textiles that were regarded by critics as ‘truly modern in spirit.’”

Illustrated in Boydell, *The Architect of Floors*, 1996, pp. 100–1; Jessie Bane Stephenson, *From Old Stencils to Silk Screening*, 1953, includes several of Dorn’s patterns that were manufactured in New York including *Leaves of Grass*, p. 226.

144” H x 49” W





SHAPE
SCREEN-PRINTED COTTON BY SHIRLEY CRAVEN FOR HULL TRADERS LTD.
English, 1963

The bold patterns and colors that appeared on 1960s British textiles, by designers like Shirley Craven (b. 1934), transformed interiors from the prevailing midcentury modernism of the 1950s to mod. In spaces for both living and business, curtains and upholstery fabrics produced by firms, such as Hull Traders Ltd., complemented space-age chairs and tables, including Hull Traders' own Tomotom line of furniture. An exuberant graphic quality marked this trend and Craven's *Shape* for Hull Traders, stands out as emblematic of a period where abstraction met a formal design sensibility.

Craven, who received her diploma from Hull College of Art in 1954 and studied textile printing at the Royal College of Art from 1955–58, began designing for Hull Traders Ltd. in 1959. Just twenty-five years old, Craven was quickly appointed that same year as their color and design consultant, giving her the role of art director and advisor on the firm's overall design policy. In 1962, she became the firm's director. Hull Traders, which had been founded in 1957 by Tristram Hull to showcase British crafts, was, by the following year, marketing screen-printed furnishing fabrics; by 1959, these textiles were the firm's primary business due largely to Craven's involvement and her innovative ideas.

Shape is one of Craven's designs for Hull Traders' 1963 line. That year, the British trade journal *Official Architecture and Planning* wrote in its new products column: "An advance glimpse of their autumn trends in furnishing textiles shows that Hull Traders Limited are maintaining their swing to abstract, as opposed to floral designs, which was a salient feature of their last year's collection. The three new designs seen so far are all colourful and striking and are by Shirley Craven." *Shape* features irregular abstract forms, in saturated colors, that are delineated by outlines that extend, in curling lines, beyond their necessary function of demarcation. Its design was "inspired by landscape viewed from a distance at different times of day" and is said to be one of Craven's favorite patterns. Printed on the selvedge are the following identifications: "SHAPE designed by CRAVEN A Time Present Fabric" and "Hand printed by Hull Traders Ltd."

Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, Craven's work garnered numerous prizes, surpassing her colleagues in the number of awards. *Shape*, along with Craven's *Division* and *Sixty-three*, won the 1964 Design Centre Award from the Council of Industrial Design. In 1968, *Design* magazine wrote that "the combination of Hull Traders and Shirley Craven has produced a steady flow of excellent modern furnishing fabric designs over the past few years, many of them trendsetters."

Craven remained the director of Hull Traders until 1980. During her two-decade association with the firm, she was a visionary talent immersed in the zeitgeist, drawing inspiration from op art, pop art, and the Beatles, while at the same time adding her strong design direction back into the mix.

Illustrated in Lesley Jackson, *Shirley Craven and Hull Traders: Revolutionary Fabrics and Furniture 1957–1980*, 2009, pp. 23, 95. An example of *Shape* is in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum (CIRC.121E-1965).

113" H x 49" W

CONCETTO SPAZIALE
SCREEN-PRINTED COTTON SATEEN BY LUCIO FONTANA FOR MANIFATTURA JSA
Italian (Busto Arsizio), 1954

Puncture, gouge, pierce, slash. Critics have often used these words to describe the gestural marks of Lucio Fontana (1899–1968) as acts of violence. (He famously countered, “I have constructed, not destroyed.”) But would one think to associate the following with the artist: drape, cover, stretch, upholster?

These terms in fact represent a period in Fontana’s artistic output when he translated back to two dimensions the very art through which he had physically disrupted the traditional picture plane. In 1954, Fontana designed *Concetto Spaziale* (Spatial Concept), the first of four fabrics conceived for Manifattura Jsa. Textile empresario Luigi Grampa founded Jsa, in 1949, in Busto Arsizio, a town near Varese known for its cotton production. While the factory remained in business until 1979, their most active and fruitful years came during the 1950s, when, thanks to *Domus* founder Gio Ponti, they were heavily involved in the Milan Triennali and frequently advertised in *Domus* and *Casabella*.

Concetto Spaziale, which reproduces one of Fontana’s eponymous artworks, depicts a series of irregular, concentric spirals composed of, and interrupted by, a trompe l’oeil of pierced holes ending in tapered shadows, the effect resulting from directional lighting at the upper left in the textile’s photographic source. Screen-printed on a lush cotton sateen, the design is repeated twice across the width. The title, artist’s name, color registration marks, and Jsa’s logo are embedded within the design’s edge rather than printed on the selvedge.

In January 1955, *Domus* published its issue inaugurating the X Triennale (1954). On the cover floats a detail of *Concetto Spaziale* on a yellow ground, folded to reveal a second version on a white ground. Decontextualized, Fontana’s *buchi* (holes), enhanced by chiaroscuro, evoke an infinitesimal, extraterrestrial space. His design is futuristic, both for its pockmarked lunar texture suggesting the postwar preoccupation with the universe and the imminent space race, a theme he explored literally in another Jsa textile, *Galassia* (Galaxy, 1955), and for its reinterpretation of the dynamism of the early modernist movement led by Marinetti, which had been an important influence on Fontana’s *Manifesto bianco* (White Manifesto), published in 1946.

Fontana’s foray into textiles is emblematic of two central concerns of Italian design at this time: the desire to create a meaningful relationship between the fine arts and industry and also to reinvigorate Italy’s economy by rehabilitating traditional industries like textile production. Conversations about the unification of the arts had begun in 1949 at the Congresso Internazionale di Architettura Moderna. Looking west toward the United States for inspiration, Ponti featured American artist-designed textiles, particularly those of Schiffer Prints, in the pages of *Domus*, and increasingly promoted American and Swedish industrial design as a model to modernize his own *patria*.

This attention manifested in the organization of exhibitions and competitions at the 1951, 1954, and 1957 Triennali. A show of contemporary textiles in 1951 drew interest in printed textiles, as well as wovens, lace, and even wicker. In 1954, Fontana joined textile designer Fede Cheti and architect Marco Zanuso to judge the international competition for printed upholstery fabrics, and he won honorable mention for another Jsa textile in a second contest. Three years later, Jsa held its own Triennale competition, which included over four thousand participants entering five thousand textile designs.

Unlike Fontana’s other designs for Jsa, *Concetto Spaziale* received international acclaim. In June 1955, architect Enrico Taglietti organized a show of modern design from the X Triennale at the David Jones Gallery in Sydney. Taglietti’s installation for “my modern Italian home,” as he called it in *Australian Women’s Weekly*, included a bed by Leonardo Fiori upholstered in the fabric. Two months later, *Design* called it “a subtle and successful abstract pattern.” As late as 1959, it was used by architect Vittorio Faglia on a sofa at a home in Monza photographed for *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim*.

With *Concetto Spaziale*, Fontana coherently synthesized artisanal and mechanized production, marrying his art with Italy’s achievements in textile production. Moreover, that the pattern relies so heavily on light, links it with Fontana’s works in other media, like his *luci spaziali* and *soffitti spaziali* (spatial lighting and spatial ceilings), especially his ceiling for the Breda Pavilion cinema at the XXXI Fair of Milan in 1953.

By the time of Fontana’s death in 1968, this textile had long been out of production, but its image endured. The 1966 edition of the *Manifesto Bianco*, published by Galleria Apollinaire, features on its slipcase a closely related *Concetto*, possibly a reproduction of the same or a nearly identical work, save for the change in light source and shadows, demonstrating that this composition was emblematic of Fontana’s concept of Spatialism even in his last years.

76” H x 52” W



SILK CHIFFON AND SEQUINED HOTPANTS ENSEMBLE
AZZEDINE ALAÏA
French, ca. 1975

From his first formal showing in 1981 until his last collection in July 2017, Azzedine Alaïa (1935–2017) was acknowledged as a singular presence in the world of high fashion, and as one of the greatest couturiers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Celebrated as a designer whose dramatic body-conscious clothing defined the heightened femininity of 1980s and 1990s styles, Alaïa determinedly pursued his own evolving aesthetic over the course of his career. In a 2013 interview with curator Olivier Saillard, at the time of his retrospective exhibition at the Musée Galliera, Alaïa stated that he continually returned to design ideas from his early years and that each of his dresses contained elements of an earlier model, whether from a recent collection or ten years prior. Zipper and Band-Aid dresses, flared “skating” skirts, innovative uses of fabrics, leathers, lacing and metal-grommet details, and inimitable tailoring have all become hallmarks of the designer’s oeuvre.

Born in Tunis, in 1935, Alaïa attended the École des Beaux-Arts as a teenager where he studied sculpture—training that influenced his approach to designing for the female body, and encouraged his passion for exploring and mastering the malleable properties of fabrics. Subsequently, Alaïa was employed, in Tunis, by a prominent French couturiere Madame Richard, before moving to Paris in 1957. In 1964, following two years at Guy Laroche, Alaïa established a small atelier and living space in the rue de Bellechasse, where he would remain until 1984, before relocating to larger premises in the Marais. His early clients included novelist Louise de Vilmorin and actresses Arletty and Greta Garbo.

In 1981, leading fashion publications—*Elle*, *L’Officiel*, *Vogue*, and *Women’s Wear Daily* among others—heralded Alaïa’s arrival as the “new hot name” on the fashion scene, and, in 1982, he founded his eponymous company, Alaïa, SARL. His success was immediate. He became one of the most featured couturiers over the next two decades. Supermodels Naomi Campbell, Stephanie Seymour, Veronica Webb, and Linda Evangelista appeared frequently in the pages of the international fashion press in Alaïa’s latest creations. In 1985, he received two prestigious French fashion awards, *Créateur de la mode* and *Meilleure collection française*. Although known primarily as a fashion designer, Alaïa also created costumes for film, theater, and ballet.

Alaïa was one of the few among his contemporaries able to produce singlehandedly an entire garment, from its initial design, to preparing the toile, and constructing the finished piece. His unwavering commitment to his work, and unwillingness to compromise his rigorous standards, led him, in 1987, to break with the traditional haute couture calendar and its strictly imposed system of seasonal collections. Thereafter, Alaïa showed his consistently acclaimed collections when he deemed them ready.

This evening ensemble, dating to his early career in the rue de Bellechasse, was made about 1975 for a private client whose husband was in the fashion industry. The long-sleeved, thigh-length, inky-blue chiffon dress floats over a sleeveless bifurcated tunic of deep sapphire sequins; the matching silk charmeuse collar, cuffs, center front-buttoned band, and hem define the contours of the dress, adding glistening accents. Christophe van Weyhe, Alaïa’s longtime partner and collaborator, created the hand-written label, a practice he continued until the official label “Alaïa / Paris” was registered in 1983.

The ensemble incorporates characteristic Alaïa elements that would recur in the following decades including a preference for the stark elegance of dark colors—in 2013, he noted that black was omnipresent in his collections. Play between layers of transparent materials appealed to Alaïa, who described chiffon as a “smoky veil” that softened vivid colors and revealed the wearer’s skin tone. Here, the chiffon gently obscures the sheen of the sequins that cover the body. Lastly, the modified shirtdress form reflects Alaïa’s admiration for the sophisticated simplicity of men’s haberdashery that he often explored in dazzling white cotton, and plays with the femininity of chiffon translated into a classic masculine garment.

As the couturier said about himself, “I am the craftsman of my own knowledge.” Alaïa’s designs reflect a purity that derives from the couturier’s unmatched construction skills and his tireless dedication to the perfection of his technical expertise. In addition to his retrospective at the Musée Galliera, Alaïa’s work has been shown at the Musée d’art contemporain, Bordeaux (1985), the Palazzo Corsini, Florence (1996), the Groninger Museum, Groningen (1997), the Guggenheim Museum, Soho, New York (2000), the Groninger Museum, Groningen (2011), and the Galleria Borghese, Rome (2015).





Published by

CORA GINSBURG LLC

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With special thanks to Whitney Blausen, Jim Ffrench, Andrew Gardner, and Giles Kotcher

PHOTOGRAPHY

Michael Fredericks
Simon Cherry, p. 23

PRINTED BY

Pressroom Printer & Designer Ltd., Hong Kong

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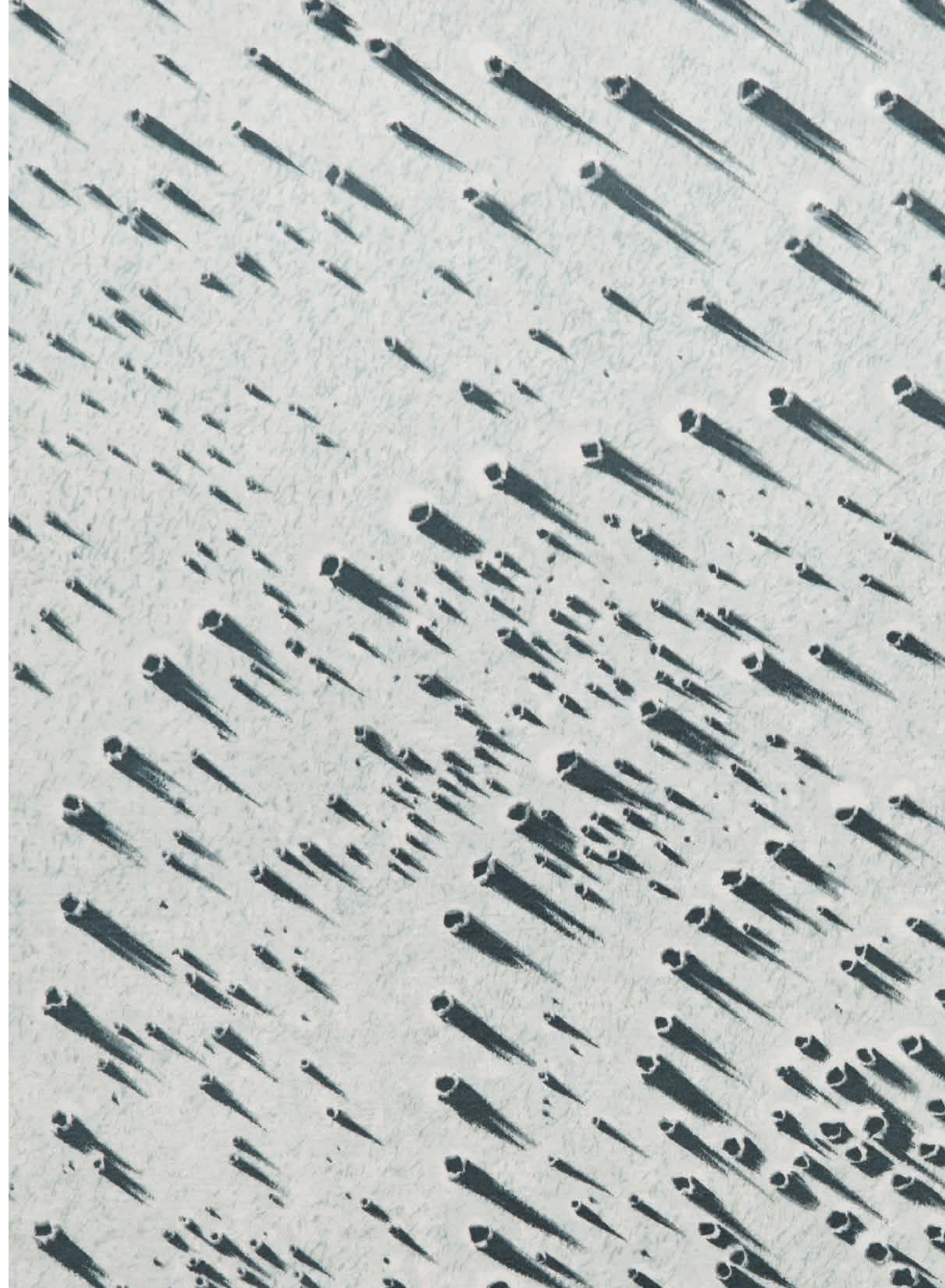
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