

EXQUISITE THREADS
ENGLISH EMBROIDERY
1600s–1900s

Artwork labels

ENGLAND

(Charles I being handed the key to the Castle)

mid 17th century

silk, metal threads, metal, mica, glass (eyes), linen, claw, wool (padding)

Private collection, Melbourne

Typically, a number of individuals were involved in creating the elements comprising embroidered panels. The pattern maker, who was often a professional, determined the original design, while specific elements, such as hands, were just one of many materials available to be purchased premade. What is interesting in this embroidered panel is the way the hands are constructed with wire and cord, in comparison to the carved wooden hands of the other needlework panel in the exhibition.

(ENGLAND)

(King Charles I and Henrietta Maria)

mid 17th century

silk, linen, paper, metal and silk (thread), mica, pearls, coral, wood, cotton (wadding)

Purchased, 1957

1733-D4

This embroidered raised-work picture, showing a couple bearing royal regalia, exemplifies the manner in which needlework could indicate the maker's political allegiances. Thought to depict Charles I and his wife Henrietta Maria of France, it could have been made before or after the king's execution in 1649. After his death, a cult following developed among those who opposed his sentence as a 'tyrant, traitor and murderer; and a public and implacable enemy to the Commonwealth of England'. Charles I was the first monarch to be put on trial for treason.

HENRY POOLE & CO., London

tailor

est. 1806

Privy councillor's uniform

1939

wool, gilt-metal (thread), silk (lining, hat), ostrich feathers, leather, cotton

Gift of The Lord Casey of Berwick, 1969

D105.a-e-1969

Since the nineteenth century, gilded and dashing uniforms have provided an important source of work for professional embroiderers. Signifying distinction in office, this richly decorated outfit featuring highly specialised goldwork was worn in office by Right Honourable Richard Gardner Casey.

The jacket is hand-embroidered over padded templates (of vellum, oak or cord padding) using three different types of gold wire purls – a thread coiled into a hollow spring with no core. Elsewhere, leaves have been executed in passing thread, a wound thread with a silk core, with rows of gold paillettes and sequins used for emphasis.

Augustus Welby Northmore PUGIN

designer

England 1812–52

Mrs Lucy POWELL maker

England active 1850s

Misses L. and W. BROWN makers

England active 1850s

Cope

mid 1840s, made 1853

silk, metal

The Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission, Archdiocese of Melbourne

After his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1834, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin became a leading figure in the nineteenth-century British Gothic movement. The architect, designer, artist and critic began designing ecclesiastical garments in a style he believed better reflected medieval forms. Embroidery had been an important part of the adornment of medieval vestments, and Pugin's designs reflect this. This cope, with embroidered velvet hood, and nearby mitre were commissioned and worn by James Alipius Goold, first Catholic bishop of Melbourne.

Augustus Welby Northmore PUGIN

designer

England 1812–52

Mrs Lucy POWELL maker

England active 1850s

Misses L. and W. BROWN makers

England active 1850s

Mitre

mid 1940s, made c. 1858–59

silk, metal, paste, spangles

The Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission, Archdiocese of Melbourne

Mrs COSTELLO

England active mid 20th century

The Creation

mid 20th century

regenerated cellulose, silk (thread), metal (thread), leather

The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria

(ENGLAND)

Bible cover

early 17th century
linen, silk (thread)

Presented by the National Gallery Women's Association, 1974

D10-1974

The connection between religious subject matter and devotional function is emphasised in this needlework Bible-cover from around 1625. The stories depicted – Elijah fed by ravens sent by the Lord, and Hagar and Ishmael saved from death by an angel who leads them to a well – both impart the message (emphasised by Protestantism) that the way to salvation is through faith in God alone. Both images are derived from illustrations by Matthäus Merian in his *Icones Biblicae* published in Frankfurt before 1630. Compilations of illustrations such as this were an important source of pictorial designs for embroiderers.

Ann Gillmore REES

born England 1900, worked in Australia 1930s–82,
died 1982

Virgin and Child

c. 1933

linen, silk (thread), metallic thread

Presented by the Estate of Mr William Rees, 1984

CT6-1984

(ENGLAND)

(The finding of Moses)

c. 1675

silk (satin, thread), mica, seed pearls

Gift from the Estate of Marion Fletcher, 2013

2013.79

It was common for young English girls to complete a picture panel as the final part of their embroidery education. This work illustrates the Old Testament story *The finding of Moses*, where the infant Moses is discovered by Pharaoh's daughter by the River Nile. However, the depictions of the dress of Pharaoh's daughter and her attending ladies, as well as the stylised architecture in the background, do not echo ancient Egypt but rather the fashion of the Restoration period; a choice that makes the biblical tale contemporary with its English maker.

Mary MATCHIN

England active 1730s

Sampler

1734

linen, silk (thread)

Presented by Kay Servante, 1990

CT31-1990

This authored sampler includes a metrical version of the Ten Commandments alongside narrow chain, satin and cross-stitch band patterns, the King's initials and freestyle Tudor roses. Its combination of moral verse and practical stitchery within the overall design reveals something of the role samplers played as part of a girl's formal education.

(ENGLAND)

Sampler

1692

linen, silk (thread), metal (thread)

Purchased, 1952

1112-D4

For young middle-class women, embroidery was a matter of learning, discipline and moral instruction; skills honed through the making of samplers. As the first items in one's repertoire of domestic needlework, samplers followed a common linear format. This early band sampler is a compilation of practical stitches and patterns. The top half includes decorative borders and two pre-modern cross-stitched alphabets (without J and U) of the type used to mark household and personal linen, while the lower half features common whitework patterns used for decorating shirts and smocks.

Sarah BURCH

England active 1770s

Sampler

1778

linen, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1951

1041-D4

By the eighteenth century, the format of English samplers had evolved into a squarer shape, reflecting their changing purpose. No longer simply a narrow dictionary of stitches, the sampler was approached in the same manner as a painting or print. Works still celebrated proficiency in lettering, decorative designs and spot motifs, but they were also an opportunity for personal expression. Many embroiderers cited contemporary poets; here Burch records three excerpts from a well-known schoolbook by Thomas Dilworth first published in 1761.

Mary DALE

England active 1810s

Sampler

1813

linen, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1913

933-D2

Susanna GILLMORE

England active 1810s

A family register, sampler

1814

wool, wool (thread)

Presented by the Estate of Mr William Rees, 1984

CT4-1984

This atypical sampler in black wool cross-stitch, with small decorative motifs, records Susanna Gillmore's family genealogy. Made when she was twelve, there is enough information here to trace her family in parish registers and determine Gillmore's marriage in 1835 in Frome to Arthur Southcombe Tucker.

Hannah ROSS

England active 1780s

Sampler

1781

linen, silk (thread)

Gift of Mrs Margaret Price, 1980

D191-1980

Margaret FOSTER

England 1843–1936

Sampler

1932

cotton, cotton (thread)

Collection of Wendy Ritchie, Melbourne

Mary Isabel TETLEY

England 1896–1982

Sampler

1931

linen, silk (thread)

Unaccessioned item

(ENGLAND)

Sampler

1725

linen (needle lace) (hollie point) (punto in aria), silk (thread)

Purchased, 1962

441-D5

(ENGLAND)

Sampler

late 19th century

linen, wool (thread), silk (thread), metal (thread, beads)

Purchased, 1978

D118-1978

Berlin wool-work patterns were first published in the early nineteenth century as a standardised form of domestic needlecraft. Black-and-white patterns were printed onto grid paper and then hand-coloured; a method that enabled the amateur to clearly identify the colour and count of each stitch. Later, these designs were industrially printed. Typically worked in cross- or tent stitch, Berlin work is characterised by the use of vibrantly hued wool yarns often stitched in several shades of the same colour to produce a three-dimensional effect. This particular sampler was most likely a reference tool illustrating how designs would look when worked.

ENGLAND

(Jacobean crewel work pelmet or bed valance)

1600–99

wool

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased, 1983

NGA 83.283

Jacobean embroidery refers to a style that flourished during the reign of King James I of England, from 1603 to 1625. During this period crewel work evolved from Jacobean patterns, in which regular scroll work enclosed single botanically correct flowers and leaves, into a more randomly dispersed array of animal and vegetal forms. In the latter part of the seventeenth century the flowering tree motif became popular. Lengths of embroidered cloth such as this were used to decorate the upper framework connecting the four posts of a bed, or were used on the lower frame as a valance.

MORRIS & CO., London retailer

1861–1940

Henry HOLIDAY designer

England 1839–1927

Catherine HOLIDAY embroiderer

England 1839–1924

Hanging

1887

linen, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1976

D150-1976

This classical-inspired wall hanging was designed by the painter and stained-glass designer Henry Holiday, and embroidered by his wife, Catherine Holiday. It was retailed by William Morris's firm Morris & Co., for whom Catherine worked as a freelance embroiderer. Morris described her as one of the most talented embroiderers in Europe, and trusted her artistic aesthetic so implicitly that he allowed her to choose her own colours and stitches. The hanging is worked in long and short stitch with polychrome colours of blue, pink, yellow and white.

Mary RICHARDSON

England active 1780s

Embroidery (Firescreen)

1783

linen, silk (thread)

Gift of Mrs A. B. Kelly, 1972

D21-1972

A bouquet of naturalistic twining flowers, including roses, honeysuckles and chrysanthemums tied with a ribbon, was a popular decorative choice for firescreens and upholstery in the 1760s. Similar floral designs appeared on printing patterns produced at Spitalfields, London, and were laden with symbolism. The colourful butterflies placed at random add a note of personal whimsy to this unconventional half-finished piece, perhaps chosen from one of the many illustrated miscellanies of natural history issued by print sellers such as John Overton, or copied from life.

(ENGLAND)

Embroidered panel

early 18th century
linen, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1913

967-D2

This panel is thought to have been inspired by the Japanese porcelain *Imari* ware, made in the kilns of Arita on Kyushu Island. A popular style of *Imari* ware combined figurative designs with complex backgrounds of various linear patterns derived from textile design. This panel depicts a large pair of birds perched on a stylised hillock, evoking the Chinese scholar's rock, set against repeated patterns of petals and parallel arcs. The background is decorated with intricate backstitch mimicking both the running stitch patterns on Japanese textiles and the linear patterns seen in the background on *Imari* porcelain wares.

Ann Gillmore REES

born England 1900, worked in Australia 1930s–82,
died 1982

From my window

c. 1927

linen, wool (thread)

Presented by the Estate of Mr William Rees, 1984

CT5-1984

Ann Gillmore Rees was a successful teacher and artist. Born in Bristol in 1900, she trained at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London between 1923 and 1928, studying design for printed textiles, book illustration and embroidery, as well as wood engraving. Rees went on to teach embroidery between 1933 and 1938 at the Institute of Education at London University, where she attracted great praise. Her needlework featured in an exhibition of modern embroidery at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 1933, not long after this piece was made.

Daniel MYTENS

Dutch c. 1590– c. 1647, worked in England 1618–
35

John Ashburnham

c. 1628–30
oil on canvas

Everard Studley Miller Bequest, 1971

E1-1972

(ENGLAND / THE NETHERLANDS)

Gloves

c. 1620

leather, silk (lining, thread), metal (thread, fringe, spangles)

Purchased, 1956

658G.a-b-D4

In seventeenth-century England gloves played important social and ceremonial roles and were worn on almost every occasion, from hawking to dancing to fighting and dining. They were also symbolic of trust and honour, possibly because of their use in ecclesiastical ceremonies and in law.

This pair of gloves is quite similar in style to those depicted in the nearby portrait of John Ashburnham by Daniel Mytens. The embroidery would first have been worked on silk, then cut out and applied to the gauntlet, or cuff, of the glove. Mysteriously, one glove is pierced on the ground with Ashburnham's sword.

(ENGLAND)

Waistcoat

(1780)

silk, silk (thread), linen (back, lining)

Collection of Richard Cawley

During the eighteenth century, expensive embroidered three-piece silk suits were the height of fashionable luxury among the upper classes. Commonly embellished with ornate scrolling floral designs, most needlework waistcoats made in this era were professionally embroidered first as flat pieces of separate components and retailed by merchants. Known as 'patterns', these pieces included all the individual components required to make the finished article; two fronts, button covers and pocket flaps. The patterns were then taken to a tailor, who assembled the garment to the client's measurements and added backs and linings.

(ENGLAND)

Evening cape

c. 1924

silk (crepe, velvet, thread), cotton and cotton-wool (interlining), glass (beads, diamanté)

The Schofield Collection.

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant
from the Government of Victoria, 1974

D250-1974

The embroidered roses on this *Evening cape* are in the Art Deco style; a movement in art and design initiated in France which influenced artists and designers all over the world. Art Deco absorbed patterns and shapes from ancient and exotic cultures, folk, classical and avant-garde art, as well as Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. The stylised flattened imagery of woodblock prints was widely admired, influencing illustrators, embroiderers and couturiers in their application of decorative motifs.

Graphic depictions of the rose became popular during the period. Here, each rose is worked from flowing lines of continuous chain stitch.

(ENGLAND)

Coif

early 17th century

linen, silk (thread), gilt-metal (thread, spangles)

Purchased, 1977

D152-1977

Covering the head when both indoors and outside was considered important for modesty and health. While women of all classes wore close-fitting coifs, embroidered versions, either made at home or purchased ready-made, were fashionable among the upper classes between the 1590s and 1620s. This cap is decorated with silver gilt filé and yellow silk floss in a combination of braid, chain, Cretan and double-running stitches. The repeat pattern of three large stylised flowers, including roses and borage, is interspersed with applied metal thread spiders' webs and once-shiny sequins.

(ENGLAND)

Section of an apron

1711

cotton (muslin, thread, braid)

Gift of Mrs N. McLeish, 1978

D36-1978

Muslin was one of the most popular fabrics imported into England from India in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. For embroidery, muslins were first stretched on a frame or attached to a paper backing. Designs were either taken from textile prototypes or printed sources, and could be drawn by the amateur embroiderer, an embroidery teacher or a trained designer. The outlandish birds embroidered on this apron show various sources, from the Indian peacock and Chinese phoenix to earlier English needlework bird motifs seen in seventeenth-century embroidery. The sinuous linear design recalls that of European 'bizarre' silk brocades.

(ENGLAND)

Stomacher

early 18th century
linen, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1913

963-D2

The tabs at the side of this unlined stomacher would have been pinned to the wearer's corset before the gown was closed over the edges. The textile's warp and weft threads have shifted slightly over time, perhaps from repeated pulling of the textile taut across the woman's breast. The embroidery depicts large flowers in full bloom, balanced symmetrically over most of the surface – a design in favour during the first third of the eighteenth century.

ENGLAND

Stomacher

1720–40

silk, silk (thread, ribbon), gilt-metal (thread, cord, braid),
linen (lining), whalebone

Purchased, 1982

CT209-1982

A stomacher is a decorative V-shaped panel that fastens the open centre-front of a woman's bodice. This *Stomacher* is lined with whalebone to hold the panel rigid. In its upper third, a dynamic design retains the symmetry typical of the period, with meandering stems and blooms accented by metallic thread cascading below. The decorative crisscross gold cord lacing served the function of providing anchorage for the ends of a lady's kerchief, which she might tuck seductively into her bodice.

(ENGLAND)

Bag

1820–50

silk (satin, ribbon, thread, tassels)

Gift of Mrs Nell Martin, 1978

D33-1978

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the bag became an indispensable decorative accessory as the simplicity of the neoclassical silhouette prevented pockets from being hidden under full skirts. These delicate silk bags were known as reticules, possibly drawn from the Latin term *reticulum* which described small net bags from Roman times. A drawstring cord functioned to both fasten the bag and as its handle. The surface of *Bag*, dated between 1820 and 1850, is worked in pinched appliquéd cloth joined by embroidered stalks linking the flowers' sprays.

(ENGLAND)

Handbag

c. 1926

silk, silk (thread), beads, sequins, plastic (frame)

Unaccessioned item

In the 1920s the absence of pockets on slim dresses again gave importance to bags. Women's new urban lifestyles necessitated bags in which to hold their lipstick and cigarettes, and these accessories, like their dresses, were often highly embellished. Evening bags were regularly made of silk extravagantly decorated with embroidery, beads, sequins and metallic cord. This *Handbag* is playfully asymmetrical in its bold colour palette, popular in the period.

Norman HARTNELL

England 1902–79

An embroidery sample approved by Her Majesty the Queen for Her Coronation dress

1953

silk, wool, metallic thread, artificial pearls and gemstones,
beads and sequins

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased, 1986

NGA 86.1804

This embroidery sample was proposed by Hartnell for Queen Elizabeth II's coronation dress. Its stately iconographic fusion brings together emblems of the Commonwealth, including the Tudor rose of England, the Scottish thistle, the Welsh leek and the shamrock of Ireland, complemented by the wattle of Australia, the maple leaf of Canada, the New Zealand fern, South Africa's protea, a pearly lotus flower of India, a second opalescent lotus flower of Ceylon and Pakistan's wheat, cotton and jute.

LIBERTY, London

est. 1875

Burnous

c. 1910

silk satin, cotton, metal (hook and eye), silk (thread, cord, tassel)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of David Syme & Co. Limited, Fellow, 1977

D85-1977

The burnous – a long, flowing cloak of Arab and Moorish descent – quickly became a popular staple of the London department store Liberty & Co. in the early 1900s.

The boldly delineated pattern of flora in warm and subtle tones, coupled with the exotic cut of the garment itself, harks back to the artful simplicities of pre-industrial times. In its allegiance to the handmade, the *Burnous* belies nostalgia for the artisanal legacy of medieval Europe, as well as enchantment with the splendour of the Far East.

(ENGLAND)

Purse

early 17th century

linen, silk (thread), gilt-metal (thread), seed pearls

Felton Bequest, 1970

D59-1970

This small square purse is typical of bags of the period, sometimes described as 'sweet bags' because they held sweet powders to scent clothes and linen. A single plant laden with flowers and leaves fills the surface. These tent-stitched flowers contrast with the background which is worked extravagantly in expensive silver thread using Gobelin stitch. The once-bright gold and silver stems are worked in a variety of plaited braid stitches. One solitary sequin remains, presumably the sole survivor of many others which would have made this bag even more luxurious and glittering.

(ENGLAND)

Fragments of embroidery

early 17th century

linen, silk (thread), metal (thread, spangles)

Purchased, 1913

966.a-b-D2

These two embroidered linen fragments survive from a larger work, most likely a loose-cut jacket or decorative flat cover. Featuring a dominant strapwork design worked in surface stitches using silver-gilt metal threads, scrolling curves terminate in finials with grotesque fish-like heads armed with sharp teeth. Amidst this runs a finer, secondary interlace decorated with honeysuckles, tulips, roses and strawberries, while further birds, caterpillars and butterflies enliven the overall design.

Close inspection shows the underlying inked design is visible where the embroidery threads are missing, suggesting it was marked out by a professional pattern drawer.

(ENGLAND)

Apron

1730s

silk (faille, thread), silver-plated brass (thread), cardboard (filling), starch paste

Purchased, 1970

D18-1970

This apron features naturalistic floral and vegetal silk floss embroidery alongside highly accomplished metal thread work. Across the front, carefully placed sprays and foliage are executed in long and short stitch bordered by a symmetrical raised leaf design that has been wrapped over paper or card then applied to the surface.

During analysis, NGV textile conservators discovered that the oxidised metal threads revealed traces of gold and silver. This, combined with the visible presence of a yellow silk thread core, typical of gold work, led to the conclusion that the original effect would have been one of gilded brilliance.

William LARKIN

English c. 1585– 1619

Mary, Lady Vere

c. 1612–15

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds donated by Leigh Clifford AO and Sue Clifford, Alan and Mavoumeen Cowen, the Fox Family Foundation, donors to the Larkin Appeal and the proceeds of the National Gallery of Victoria Annual Dinner, 2014 2014.553

Despite her Puritan sympathies, Lady Mary Vere is depicted in William Larkin's painting surrounded by lavish textiles; she stands on an exotic oriental carpet before lustrous red drapes, and her hand rests on a table cover embellished with fine gilt embroidery. Lady Vere's low-cut dress of black velvet, ornamented with expensive needlepoint accessories, and red underskirt decorated with metal thread embroidery work in sympathy to create a dramatic effect.

(ENGLAND)

Pelisse and dress

c. 1818

cotton (lawn, thread), silk (ribbon), metal (buttons and hook and eye)

The Schofield Collection.

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the Government of Victoria, 1974

D116.a-c-1974

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, prevailing neoclassical styles for women determined a fashion for simple white muslin and cotton dresses. At first unadorned, these gowns soon evolved into garments with greater complexity of cut and surface ornamentation, including white on white embroidery.

Worked in cotton thread on a fine cotton lawn, the wheat-sheath design delineating the wrist on the sleeves, and the formalised petals running the length of the pelisse are skilfully worked in a raised satin stitch, probably padded with tiny seeding stitches sewn within the outline of each motif.

(ENGLAND)

Writing box

c. 1665

wood, silk (thread), velvet, metallic thread, mirror glass, glass, silk, pewter, paper, lead, hand-coloured engraving, seed pearls, mica, gilt brass, leather, cotton (thread), brass, (other materials)

Purchased, 1972

D87.a-p-1972

Among the most complex of seventeenth-century embroidered objects were caskets, designed to hold precious objects such as jewellery, writing equipment, cosmetics and keepsakes. Decorated with a range of entertaining and instructive biblical stories, the main image on this casket's lid, Rebecca offering water to Eliezer, is derived from an engraving by Marten de Vos published in 1585. The tale of Rebecca focuses on her act of kindness and compassion which made her a desirable wife. In creating embroidery illustrating this tale, a woman simultaneously imbibed and demonstrated contemporary ideals of femininity.

(ENGLAND)

Bed curtain

early 18th century

linen, wool (thread), silk (thread)

Gift of Miss Mary Bostock, 1971

D202 B-1971

Embroidery patterns in the seventeenth and eighteenth century were influenced by Asian textiles, porcelain and lacquerware imported into England from India, China and Japan. Chinese blue-and-white porcelain from the late Ming and early Qing periods was immensely popular in Europe and America, and its forms and palette appear in their embroidered textiles. The border of this bed curtain, embroidered in blue wool on a white linen ground, echoes the curvilinear medallion borders on porcelain of the period exported from China.

(ENGLAND)

Pillow cover

1704

linen, silk (thread)

The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, embroidery began to move away from the heavy stylised floral designs of the Jacobean era to lighter, more naturalistic flower patterns. On this pillow cover, delicate sprays of flowers in variegated pink linen thread are outlined in black. Tantalisingly, the initials 'E A C K' and fortuitous date of 1704 are worked in fine black cross-stitch in the central area. The date is also found in the scrolling border design.

(ENGLAND)

Section of a bed curtain

c. 1680

linen-cotton, wool (thread)

Purchased, 1913

943-D2

(ENGLAND)

Beaded lambrequin

late 19th century

cotton, silk (thread), glass (beads)

The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria

By 1850 more than 14,000 Berlin-work designs had been published, with charts, wools and canvases exported throughout the world. The ready availability of these patterns in shops and publications, as well as the technique's simplicity, encouraged large numbers of middle-class women to take up needlework. Kits were often sold with the most difficult areas of the design already complete, as evidenced by this lambrequin, leaving the buyer to simply fill in the background; a fact that greatly diminished the embroiderer's design role.

(ENGLAND)

Braces

c. 1860

cotton (canvas), wool (thread), glass (beads), steel (beads), silk (thread, grosgrain), kid leather (tabs), metal (buckle), rubber (elastic), sinew (cord)

Purchased, 1982

CT98.a-b-1982

The hard-wearing nature of Berlin work, and the ease with which it could be stitched, resulted in a proliferation of ornamental needlework within Victorian homes. Interiors were transformed by vivid wool-work firescreens, valances and seat covers in a range of designs that included floral imagery, favoured pets and famous paintings. Men's wardrobes were also made over with embroidery; slippers, smoking caps and braces became popular gifts for fathers and husbands courtesy of patterns published in instructional magazines such as *The Ladies' Home Journal*. Braces in particular were considered a perfect wedding gift from a bride to her fiancé.

(ENGLAND)

Slippers

c. 1840

linen, velvet, wool (thread), leather (lining, sole)

Purchased, 1982

CT99.a-b-1982

Owing to the general Victorian fondness for floral decorative motifs, designs for Berlin-work slippers rarely varied, regardless of whether they were for women or men. Patterns for slippers such as this were a mainstay of ladies' journals; a centrally dominant spray covered the vamp, with smaller accompanying blooms extending around each side of the shoe. These and other simplified designs were easily worked in petit point on canvas by the home embroiderer, who then took them to the local shoemaker to be made up with leather soles and a small stacked heel.

ENGLAND

Bed curtain

1720–30

linen (twill), wool (thread)

Felton Bequest, 1928

2922-D3

The flowering tree was the predominant design for fashionable embroidered bed hangings produced in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The design was adapted by English embroiderers from motifs depicted on the much coveted, brightly coloured, washable cotton chintzes being imported from India in large quantities at that time. This pattern is a stylised hybrid combining Chinese, Persian, Indian and European elements, coalesced over centuries of trade and modified for European tastes.

ENGLAND, Cornwall

Coverlet

c. 1700

silk (satin, thread), gilt-metal (thread)

Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Mrs Jessica Taylor (née Durnford) and family, Member, 2001

2001.309

This coverlet demonstrates the cross-cultural sources embroiders drew upon in their designs. The border, with its pale colours and floral scrolling design, is reminiscent of the Rococo style adopted in France at the beginning of the 1700s. Yet the introduction of textiles from India and China to England was also a major influence. The central medallion and corners feature distinctly Chinese motifs with exotic trees and multicoloured phoenix-like birds. Exhibiting a range of needlework techniques, the coverlet features satin, long and short stitch and French knots, executed in colourful twisted silks and gold and metal threads.