TRANSCENDING FASHION

THE LACE ACCESSORY

NOVEMBER 17, 2023

EXHIBIT CATALOG

TOURS BY APPOINTMENT
MON THRU SAT: 1:00, 3:00
$3.00 NON-MEMBER ADMISSION
(ADVANCE TICKETS REQUIRED)
CALL 510-843-7290

LACIS MUSEUM OF LACE AND TEXTILES
2982 ADELINE STREET
BERKELEY, CA 94703
LacisMuseum.org
LMLT was established in October of 2004, as the legacy of Kaethe Kliot, who was the spirit of the Lacis Textile Center and Retail Store, a haven for the textile community and all involved in virtually every aspect of the textile arts—a place where she provided support, encouragement and knowledge to all. This spirit remains, after her untimely passing in 2002, in the Museum which encompasses all that she loved.

This spirit is best exemplified by comments received from those she touched:

...whenever I needed to recharge my spirit, I knew that a visit to Lacis would do the trick...

...her sense of the appropriate, that just-rightness which made Laces the alluring treasure trove that draws us in...

...her enthusiasm was contagious and she always wanted to share it. She was the consummate teacher...

...she had a mission to share everything she knew...

...she did what she loved and her passion and enthusiasm was always evident...

...Kaethe was the sort of person one takes with them – part of who I am is because of her...

...She will be remembered for many things; for me it will be a sense that all is possible...

The core of LMLT is the lace and textile collection of Jules & Kaethe Kliot, representing 40 years of dedication to the preservation of the finest of human handiwork. The collection includes thousands of specimens, from pre-Columbian Peru finest laces from the 17th c. European courts, and examples of the machine laces exemplifying the 19th c. industrial revolution. An extensive library, focusing on lace, textiles and costume with over 10,000 items of books, patterns, articles and other ephemera, and a respectable collection of the related tools of the textile crafts are included in the resources of the Museum.

LMLT is dedicated knowledge and encouragement for all involved in any aspect of the textile arts.

- to preserve lace and textiles of all cultures from all periods including the patterns and tools of creation, the objects of their purpose and the literature associated with these objects.
- to provide a resource center for research and documentation of these objects.

The accessory is what defines us. It is a personal choice we make to assure our uniqueness in a world where sartorial rules dictate correctness in fashion. Lace, which, reserved only for aristocracy, was suddenly released to the passions of the proletariat. The collar and handkerchief were the accessories that captured their dreams. They could be commissioned from the finest shops, made by the wearer using the new innovative lace techniques or made by machine, a product of the new industrial revolution.

Jules Kliot, Director
Lace had a magical beginning, capturing the imagination of the aristocrats who referred to its creation as man’s greatest achievement, the creation of beauty in the air from threads alone. The challenges were to stretch the extremities of detail and the human hand. Extraordinary skill would be required not only in the making of the lace but in the creation of the finest threads. Lace was not originally an accessory item but was incorporated into the sartorial lace was now a possibility for anyone and hundreds of thousands of lace makers could support themselves by making lace.

From the fashion of the Middle Ages where sartorial dictates resulted in the most outlandish statement such as the collar in the form of the great ruff to the millstone which defied purpose and common sense, the collar morphed into many related objects of adornment, initially identified as fashion and then bypassing fashion into timeless state-
The biggest change was the release of lace from its sartorial rules, inspiring creativity. The formidable collar now became a magnificent article of self expression, becoming the popular bertha, hanging low on the shoulders, the jabot now a place over the head and the appendage on the bonnet and head scarf, and lastly the tie, tied around the neck.

The complimentary handkerchief, the timeless necessity, would follow suit. Tied initially to specific physical needs, such as wiping the brow, the handkerchief evolved to be the coveted object of luxury, elegance and social destination.
Not to be tucked away in a pocket or handbag but held in the hand and flaunted publicly.

The extreme skills of the past wouldn’t be practical and new simplified techniques were necessary and were quick to spread. Towns would develop their unique techniques and patterns in a very competitive market.

The new Industrial Revolution was fed by this high demand and the challenge of making lace by machine would overshadow hand-made lace. The concept of the “computer” was born as pegged cards could direct the threads on the loom. By the end of the 19th century,
printed patterns, new materials, and a plethora of handwork magazines invited all to participate in the creation of lace for self-adornment.

The collar became a popular accessory as it could change any everyday garment into an extraordinary vision, dependent only on the whim and skill of the creator.

In the mid 19th c. IRISH CROCHET stood at the pinnacle of the new lace. Spurred on by economic necessity resulting from the great potato famine, a new process of working was developed. Using the finest thread and a hook fabricated from the eye of a sewing needle, a skilled crocheter could produce a close imitation of the revered Point de Venice needle lace in 1/20th of the time. The lace was worked in small sections which were later joined together following a graphic pattern. This quickly evolved into a conveyor belt concept where the work could be divided into different layers of difficulty. Simple elements could be made by children and the inexperienced while the major motifs would be assigned to the most experienced. The tech-
the individual motifs could stand on their own or be incorporated into the most magnificent collars and other accessories.

**NEEDLE LACE** took a different approach to innovation. The prominent Alençon laces of the 18th century relied on structural carrying threads which supported looped threads and outlining gimp threads covered with continuous buttonhole stitches. By eliminating the carrying thread and spacing...
the binding stitches on the gimp, a far more delicate lace, quicker to execute, was the result, relying only on a basic looped or buttonhole stitch. Now called Point de Gaze it would reign as the most popular lace well into the 20th c. A further innovation would take advantage of machine-made tulle on which needle-made motifs could be appliquéd, eliminating the tedious process of a needle-made ground.

Bobbin Lace evolved with two different approaches. By combining traditional bobbin techniques with embellishment by needle lace, a combination lace called Duchesse split creation. The other approach was to appliqué bobbin lace motifs onto a machine-made tulle which was now referred to as Brussels Applique.

In the 1850s, a new lace technique called Tattting quickly gained popularity due to its ease of creation and simplicity of requiring only a small shuttle that held a single thread and which could fit into any pocket or purse. The lace was essentially the combination of rings, picots and bars in infinite combinations.

It was the ease of creating lace, requiring minimal training, that supported the concept of the accessory collar, a sure way to display a personal vision.

It was the reinvention of the 17th century lace, Mezzo Punto, now referred to as Tape Lace, where narrow woven or machine made...
lace ribbons formed the outlining design element to create the most popular lace at the turn of the 20th century. New tapes, together with a plethora of printed patterns, and creative designers supported this resurgence in lace making. “Battenberg” was the most popular name applied to these laces, with many other terms assigned by the pattern designers. The basic concept was the basting of a ribbon or tape onto a printed paper or fabric pattern, and then holding the tapes in place by needle lace stitches.

**MACHINE** involvement in the making of lace was the major innovation of the 19th century. The simple plain tulle or net was the earliest achievement. It could be used as a base for the applique of hand made lace or as the base for embroidery. Once **MACHINE-MADE TULLE** could be made in wide widths, embroidery on the tulle by needle or tambour hook became the format for specific national laces such as Carrickmacross and Limerick lace of Ireland. Designs could be free or counted, working with the geometric hexagonal holes of the mesh.
Cultural pride became a theme for lace centers. Malta, an island in the Mediterranean was identified with a unique, honey-colored silk bobbin lace incorporating stubby leaf patterns in Maltese cross patterns. In France, the new Cluny lace, born in the town of Le Puy would be identified by narrow pointed leaves.

Embroidery techniques would be another tool for openwork collars. Piercing a fabric base by pull work and drawn work techniques could compete with those of lace.

The real challenge was to mimic the ‘real’ handmade laces of needle and bobbin. The most successful attempt, achieved at the end of the century, is referred to as Schiffli or chemical lace. By computer control, threads are embroidered into a treated fabric, building up the desired density.
of the lace. By chemical means, the base fabric is removed leaving only the design threads. Some of the finest laces were made by this method.

HANDKERCHIEF

The handkerchief, a common item dating back to the earliest civilizations both East and West, has the common characteristic of a square piece of cloth. Tied initially to specific physical needs it would take on a symbolic nature serving as a device for communication and status.

It is the latter function that the handkerchief served that is the focus of this exhibit. These are the coveted objects, manifestations of luxury, elegance and social designation. Not to be tucked away in a pocket or handbag but held in the hand and flaunted publicly.

Paralleling the rise of the luxury fabrics and lace of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Lace would soon replace embroidery as the choice
of the elite. The portraits included the large handkerchiefs held elegantly in the hand. Serving a social function, the handkerchief was part of the social entertainment of the ball where it served as a communication device through the learned “language of the handkerchief.” Along with jewelry, it was a most appropriate gift given to a royal patron.

Its purpose waned in the eighteenth century as the fan became the dominant object for the display of wealth and communication. The embroidered handkerchiefs relegated to dowries.

It was in the nineteenth century that new attention to the embroidered handkerchief, particularly as the hand ornament for women, became the ultimate symbol of elegance. The romantic culture supported the perception of feminine frailty, the symbol of affection. The shape of the handkerchief would be modified by rounded corners and scalloped edges. Stitching became more complex, new patterns supported by the proliferation of ladies’ magazines. Subjects were now flowers portrayed in naturalistic ways focusing on three dimensional relief and borders of the finest lace. Whitework, traditionally worked by women reached new peaks of execution particularly in France, Switzerland and Italy.