

Artistic fabrics, unique portraits (I)

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Conserved in museums and private homes across Catalonia are a series of artistic fabrics – or woven artworks – that share many similarities with engravings and photographs but reflect a unique production technique popularised in a specific period in the history of the textile industry. These limited edition decorative fabrics generally feature portraits of illustrious figures (monarchs, politicians, military leaders, captains of industry), historical, religious or commemorative scenes, or reproductions of famous paintings, created in black and white silk on a Jacquard loom. In Catalonia, the majority of these fabrics were produced over the period between 1862 and 1974.

These Jacquard pieces, originally referred to as artistic, or “singular”, fabrics, came to the museums from private owners who recognised their value in marking a crucial period in the transformation of the textile industry. The private collectors who donated the pieces all had a direct link of some sort to textile production, whether as teachers, theorists, merchants or artists.

The fact that many of the fabrics bore the company name, the artist’s signature, the production date, or the name of the director and even the school at which they were plotted and weaved makes them, if nothing else, unique pieces, distinct from any other textile produced until that time and freely available on the market. These singular pieces also serve to illustrate the successful marriage of technology with the skill of the artist.

The perfect definition that the Jacquard system offered, with its regular alternation of one or two warps and two wefts, was the secret to obtaining pure blacks and white but also a gradient of grey shades that brought a unique luminosity and in many cases produced a relief effect, giving these fabrics their distinctive appearance.

Most Jacquard fabrics produced in this early period were for commemorative, commercial or promotional purposes, both to showcase the technical modernisation that the textile industry had undergone and to acknowledge the instruction provided by specialised schools such as the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts.

The origins of these textile images can most likely be found in the prints of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but we can also see similarities

¹ In Catalonia, one of the leading exponents was Joan Vilatobà (1878-1954), from Sabadell, who also taught at the city's Industrial School and had a direct influence on the earliest Jacquard portraits produced there. His collection is housed largely in the Sabadell Art Museum, with a selection of photographs also held by the MNAC.

² Exhibition catalogue for *La Revolució Jacquard*. Barcelona Textile and Clothing Museum and Terrassa Textile Museum, 1985.

between the artistic Jacquard fabrics produced at the turn of the twentieth century, graphic arts and the clean, professional portraits produced by photographers, on occasion calling to mind Pictorialism, a movement that spanned the period between 1890 and the end of the First World War. The artists behind this movement, such as Joan Vilatobà,¹ worked from the original photographs to create reproductions in a portrait style, creating pieces with genuine artistic value.

The portraits and other unique designs produced on Jacquard looms in Catalonia – most of them in Sabadell – are a testament to the successful adaptation of the Jacquard mechanism and its subsequent refinement by local experts.

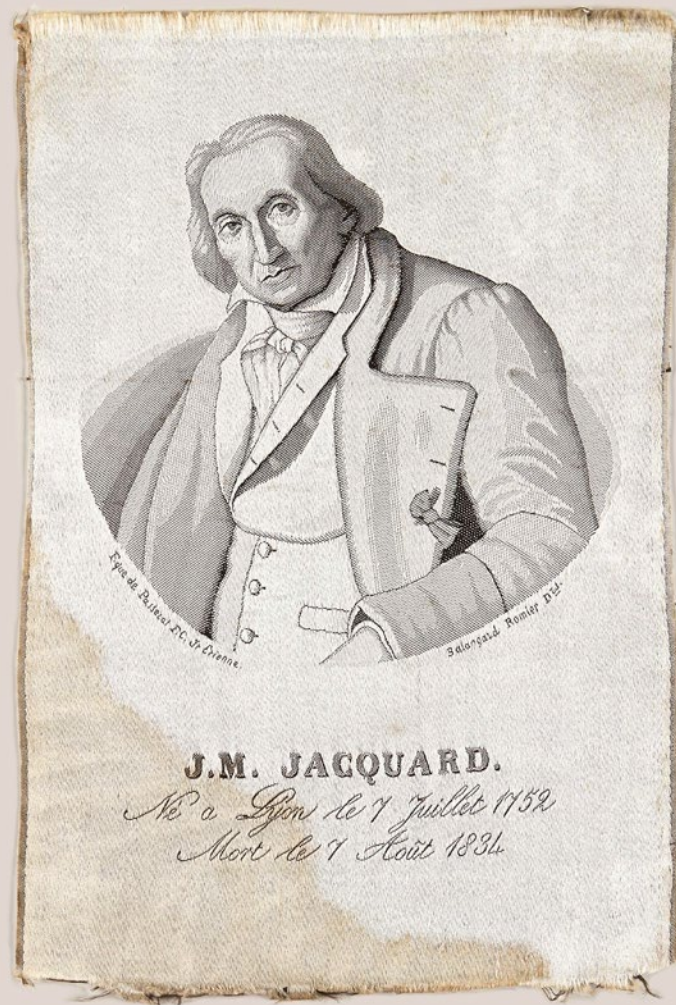
Since 1985, the year in which the Barcelona Textile and Fashion Museum and the Terrassa Textile Museum, now the CDMT, organised a joint exhibition on the technical and artistic merits of the Jacquard system to mark the 150th anniversary its creator's birth,² no further exhibition of these fabrics or their creators was organised until December 2015, when the Sabadell History Museum announced a retrospective of work produced at the city's School of Arts and Crafts.

Who was Jacquard and what was the system he devised?

In order to fully appreciate the significance of these fabrics we must first understand the mechanics of their production and know a little about the man who gave his name to the technique. Joseph Marie Jacquard (Lyon, 1752–1834) was one of the most emblematic figures in the Lyonnaise silk industry and known around the world.

Jacquard is the generic name given to the mechanism that simplified the drawloom used until the nineteenth century to produce patterned fabrics. By the end of the eighteenth century Jacquard had devised a weaving system that developed the ideas of Bouchon – who had replaced the complex system of knots and cords of the drawloom with a more straightforward arrangement of hooks and heddles (1725) – and the subsequent enhancements introduced by Falcon – who developed punched cards in 1734 – and by Vaucanson – who pioneered the automatic cylinder that took over the role of the drawboy, in 1745. As such, Jacquard was not credited as the sole inventor of the new mechanism; rather, he studied the workings of the machines developed by his predecessors and eventually devised a system that combined elements of both the Falcon and Vaucanson designs, which he unveiled in 1801. Although the first machine did not work, he persisted with the design, introducing a series of improvements and winning the praise of Napoleon himself, who commissioned the project's

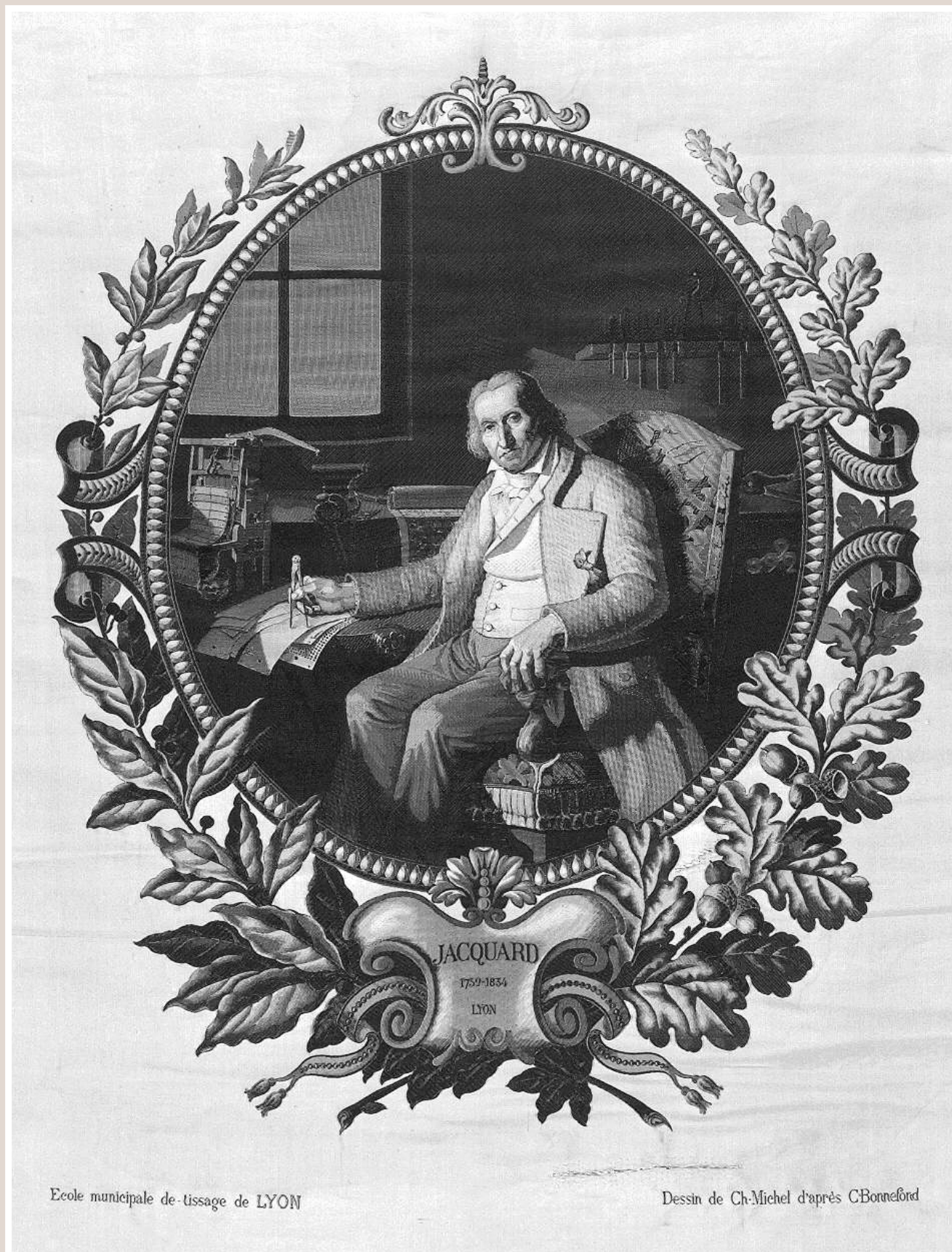
Portrait of J.M. Jacquard. Silk.
Passerat F.C. Sant Etienne. Early
twentieth century? CDMT 12515.



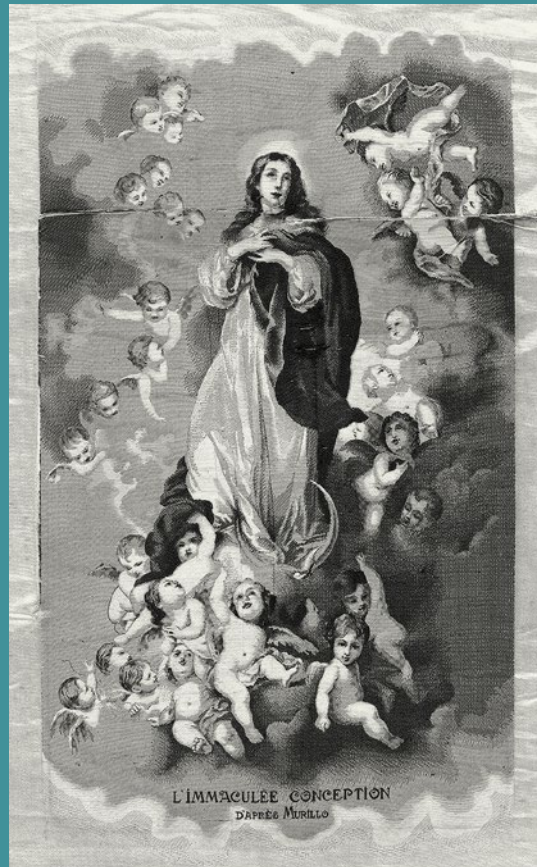
continuation. The Jacquard system greatly enhanced the manufacturing of highly complex patterned fabrics, thanks to its unique system that allowed the warp threads to be raised and lowered individually. Although considerable technical expertise was required to operate the system, it simplified procedures and lowered costs.

Mechanism

The Jacquard mechanism consists of a separate device fitted above the loom whose primary function is to enable the warp threads to be moved individually using a basic binary code of punched and unpunched holes. The drawing for the final design is set out on a sheet of special squared paper to create the cutting plan and placed on a punching machine, which codes each overlap of the warp and weft threads (the *ends* and *picks*) in a series of thin punched cards that are connected in a chain and fitted above the loom. Each pass of the weft thread activates a series of hooks, connected to heddles that control the movement of the corresponding warp threads: if the punched card is solid, it presses against the end of the heddle and the attached hook raises the warp thread; if the card contains a hole, the heddle passes through and the thread remains in place. A single card is needed for each weft row in the design.



Portrait of J.M. Jacquard. Silk. École Municipale de Tissage de Lyon, design Ch. Michel. Late nineteenth century? CDMT 10751



▲ Souvenir from 1900 exhibition. Silk. Société des mécaniques J. Verdol. Lyon, 1900. CDMT 11148.

► *Immaculate Conception*, after Murillo. Silk. France, early twentieth century? CDMT 10747.

This system is capable of producing complex stitches and is equally suitable for large and small designs. The execution, however, is extremely complex, particularly for the artistic fabrics that concern us here. It requires a detailed knowledge of different stitches and the effects they produce depending on their position relative to the light and the use of shading. Jacquard weaving combines technical and aesthetic expertise, the artist's touch, a gift for selecting the right stitch and thread, and the weaver's ability to interpret the design. The preparatory stages – drawing the design, creating the cutting plan, punching the cards and mounting the head – were particularly time-consuming and required close collaboration between artist, designer and weaver.

Creating the cutting plan is a complex operation, the point at which the designer sets out the interlacings of the warp and weft threads; if this is not done correctly, the design will lack precision and the fabric may present imperfections. Each of the completed squares in the cutting plan represents a raised warp thread.

Since it was first devised, the technology of the Jacquard system has not ceased to evolve. The first major enhancements were made in 1858, when the Italian engineer M. Vincenzi introduced a series of changes including thinner (and cheaper) punch cards that streamlined the weaving process considerably. It was this mechanism that was most widely used in Catalonia in the early twentieth century, together with the Verdol system (from *Société Anonyme des Mécaniques Verdol*), which used a continuous roll of punched paper that was thinner than the paste-board cards and lowered production times. To fully grasp the scale of the improvements to the original Jacquard system one should consider that

3 *Industria Tèxtil*, March 1934, no. 3.

4 RODON FONT, Camil. *La invención de la máquina jacquard. Estudio histórico y analítico de su proceso*. Edició de Cataluña Textil, Badalona, 1919.

5 GARCIA BALANÀ, Albert. *La fabricació de la fàbrica*. Doctoral thesis. UPF, 2011.

6 Domènech Cavaillé or Cavallé (1771-1862). His father was from Roussillon and may have adapted his surname to Catalan. Record of the machine invented by Pierre Cavaillé (inventor) for weaving linen, hemp, silk and wool. Junta de Comerç de Barcelona, 1790–92.

7 Record of Domènec Cavallé i Coll, organist, son of Pere Cavallé, requesting a subsidy to introduce to Catalonia the “Jacquard” machines he has seen in Lyon, and other matters relating to his return to France. (47f). Junta de Comerç de Barcelona.

1,000 punch cards for a Jacquard loom weighed over 50 kilograms, whereas the equivalent number for the Vincenzi system weighed 15 kilos and the continuous roll for the Verdol system weighed only 2 kilos.

The enhanced Jacquard mechanism quickly spread across the rest of Europe, though its progress was not unhindered; workers opposed its use on the grounds that rendered many of them obsolete. Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century, the system had also been adopted by French manufacturers of narrow fabrics for the clothing and accessory markets.

Recognition of Jacquard’s achievements did not come immediately, but it did arrive during his lifetime, and he is now regarded as one of the forefathers or modern computer programming, his punched card system directly inspiring the binary code on which basic programming is built.

The centenary of Jacquard’s death was marked by a series of special events in Lyon, coinciding with the textile industry’s annual trade fair.³ Some years later, debate arose concerning Jacquard’s precise influence on the design and the role of his predecessors, following in-depth study by Camil Rodon Font.⁴

The arrival of the Jacquard system in Catalonia

In Catalonia, adoption of the Jacquard system was a slower but continuous process. The exact timeline varies in different accounts, and a specific date cannot be given, but by the mid-1830s the system was certainly commonplace in cotton mills and the silk industry had some “five hundred machines”⁵. The *Junta de Comerç de Barcelona*, the city’s board of trade, would soon take an interest, and in 1822 sent Domènec Cavallé⁶ Coll to Lyon to see the latest developments in textile expertise and to purchase a Jacquard machine, presumably of the latest models. Cavallé told in a letter how he had been presented to Claudio Roure, seemingly an importer of Jacquard looms, who took him to see some machines, which must have used the Jacquard system. He quickly saw the many potential uses of the new machine in all branches of textile production and in the creation of highly complicated designs,⁷ and requested funds from the *Junta* in order to purchase one. The money was duly sent, although a subsequent request was rejected. In his account it is unclear whether Cavallé eventually made the purchase. From another written record dated 1822, signed by the manufacturer Jaume Carrancà, who had been commissioned by the *Junta* to compile a report on the state of the silk industry, it can be inferred that Jacquard looms had not yet been installed in Catalonia; Carrancà suggested that they should be introduced, given the impact they could have on the quality of the resulting fabrics and the prices that could be asked for them. In the same year, there is a record of two Jacquard looms, brought to Catalonia by the French manufacturer

8 MOLAS RIBALTA, Pere. *Los gremios barceloneses del siglo XVIII*. Confederación Española de Cajas de Ahorros, Madrid, 1970.

9 CARRERA PUJAL, Jaume. *Espíritu y fuerza de la industria textil catalana*. Gremi de Fabricants de Sabadell, Institut Industrial de Terrassa. Fomento de la Producción Española, 1943.

10 CABANA, Francesc. *Fàbriques i empresaris*. Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona, 1992–1994

11 Catalogue. *Bequests and donations to the museums of Barcelona, 1952–1963*. Junta de Museus, Barcelona, 1963. In 1958, Mr Sadó's grandchildren donated portrait of Pablo Sadó, drawn in lead by Pahissa and framed by Renard. Cat. no. 1461, p. 168.

12 LLANAS ANDIÑACH, Joan. "Síntesi històrica de la introducció i evolució de la màquina jacquard a Catalunya". *The Jacquard revolution*. Exhibition, Barcelona Textile and Fashion Museum, Terrassa Textile Museum, 1985. Pp. 31–33.

13 GUTIÉRREZ, Manuel María. *Comercio libre o funesta teoría de la libertad económica absoluta...* p. 135. 1834.

14 GARCIA BALANÀ, Albert. *La fabricació de la fàbrica*. Doctoral thesis. UPF, 2011.

15 NADAL, J. (1992), p. 123.

16 BIGORRA, Pere. *Des del vapor de la O*. Sabadell, 1974.

Joan Gras, who between 1820 and 1830 would furnish the textile factories of Barcelona with more than 400 Jacquard machines.⁸

Only a few years later, in 1826, there is reliable evidence that Jacquard looms were in use. The catalogue for a public exhibition of "Fine Arts and Industry", organised at the *Casa Llotja*, includes three handkerchiefs and shawls manufactured with a Jacquard machine that was "comparatively well known and used in various establishments in this capital".⁹

Cabana writes that it was Pierre Baurier Berchoux, from Lyon, who introduced the Jacquard system.¹⁰ Baurier was a textile merchant who arrived in arrived in Catalonia in 1820 and opened a cotton factory in Roda de Ter, which specialised in white piqué. In 1853 he was granted a five-year privilege to produce his fabrics with Jacquard looms. According to Cabana these were the first Jacquard looms in operation in Catalonia and in the whole of Spain. It would appear, however, from the evidence reported above, that the machines had in fact been introduced some years before.

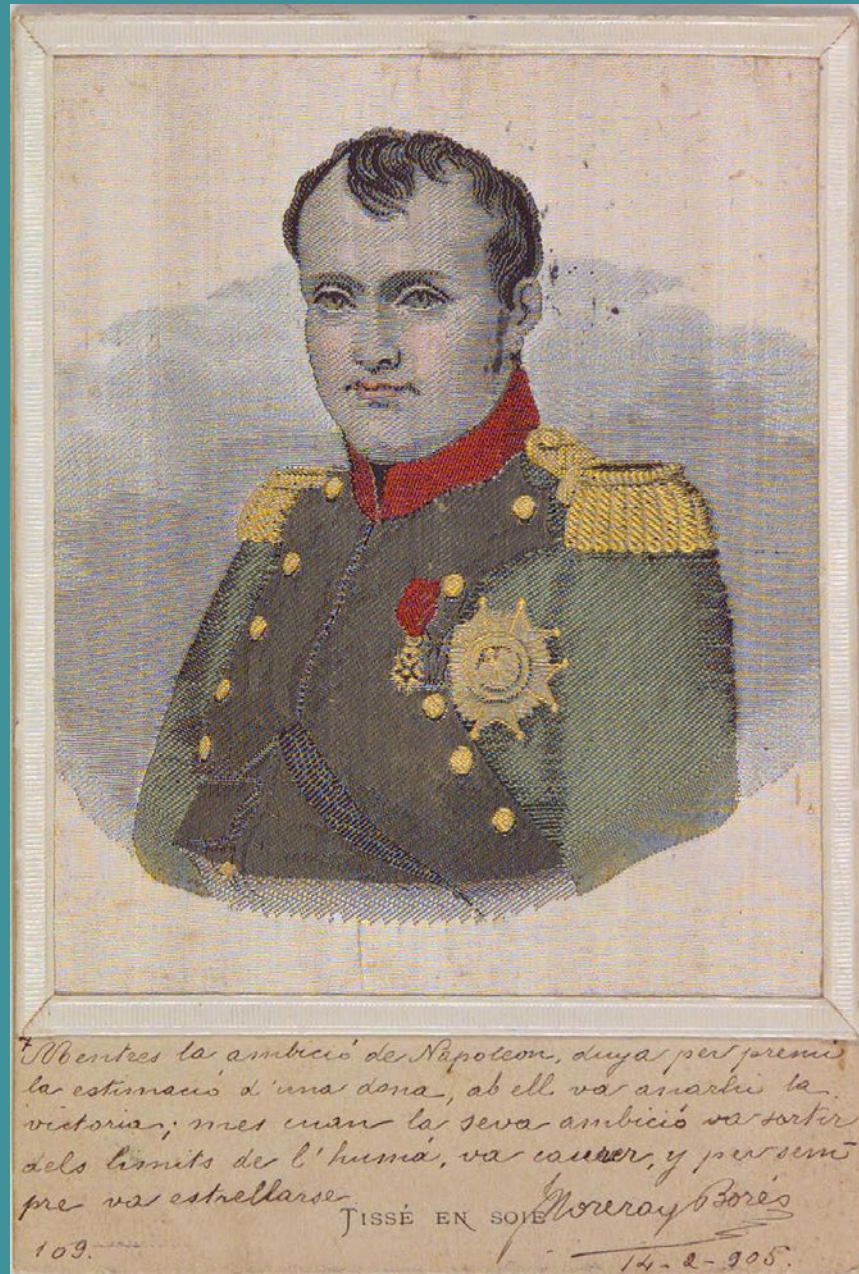
Another figure who may have been responsible for bringing the system to Catalonia was Pablo Sadó Pérez (1818-1895). As recorded in the list of donations to the Art Museums of Barcelona for 1958, the year in which Sadó's grandchildren donated a portrait of him drawn by Pahissa, Pablo Sadó Pérez is recorded as the "Introducer of the Jacquard machine to Barcelona"¹¹.

The system gradually became consolidated across Catalonia. In 1842 the *Junta de Comerç* reported widespread adoption of the flying shuttle and the Jacquard machine,¹² and Manuel María Gutiérrez¹³ suggests that by 1850, one of every two Catalan silk weavers, or *velers*, produced Jacquard textiles.

Garcia Balañà¹⁴ notes that official statistics for the year 1841 record 240 looms adapted to the Jacquard system, for producing mixed cotton fabrics. He adds that by 1856 this number had reached 500, with Jacquard looms now used to manufacture silks and silk blends; by 1900, some 2,400 Jacquard looms were also weaving fabrics such as linens and worsteds. Nadal¹⁵ states that by 1845 the Jacquard mechanism was being used in Terrassa, brought by Galí i Codoñet. In Sabadell, the system appears to have been introduced in 1840.¹⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century the system was largely consolidated; almost all of the Catalan silk, cotton and wool factories had several weavers operating Jacquard looms, reflecting demand from retailers, who valued the positives of the new techniques over its negatives. Firms such as Escuder, Casacuberta i Pujol, Sederes Balcells, Sederes Vilumara, Bernades, Malvehy and Bonaventura Solà i Sert had already adopted the new system by the end of the nineteenth century, using it for men's and women's clothing and for home fabrics.

Portrait of Napoleon. Silk. France, c. 1905. CDMT 14172.



¹⁷ Fabrics painted in Egypt during the Roman period or printed fabrics from the seventeenth and, in particular, eighteenth centuries.

Representation of human figures in fabric. The portrait technique applied to textiles

The representation of human figures in woven fabrics is no easy task, at least in the case of the faithful reproductions achieved in the Jacquard pieces we consider here. To find the oldest textile portraits we must look back to Coptic Egypt, where knights, hunters, ballerinas, saints and other Christian and mythological figures were produced in wool and linen tapestries; the depictions were lively, even if the features were somewhat roughly defined. On the other side of the globe, pre-Columbian cultures were using the same techniques and indigenous animal skins (alpaca, guanaco, vicuña and llama) to produce handmade clothing and textiles for their homes, featuring schematic human representations that typically had large and highly expressive eyes. By contrast, figurative depictions advanced far more rapidly in printed and painted fabrics,¹⁷ and even in the

18 *Les tableaux tissés de la fabrique Lyonnaise.* Exposition Grand Salon de la Bibliothèque, 1922. *La Fabrique des grands hommes*, Musée des Tissus de Lyon, 2012.

19 We need only look to the Gobelins tapestries to see how such oversized, richly detailed images were created for the grand palaces of the era. The tapestry weaving technique allows each weft thread to be manipulated individually and picked as necessary to give form to faces, bodies, dresses...

20 Lampas, brocade, satin, embroidery, silk. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, nr. 2869.

21 Brocaded lampas, satin, silk, gold leaf and metal thread. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, nr. 34313.

22 Brocaded lampas, satin, silk. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, nr. 45306.

23 In particular, *Tableaux tissés de la Fabrique Lyonnaise. Exposition Salon de la Bibliothèque.* Société des Dessinateurs Lyonnais. Lyon, 1922. *Images de soie. De Jacquard à l'ordinateur.* Somogy, éditions d'art, Paris, Museum of Art and Industry, Saint-Étienne, 2004.

24 Saint-Étienne has the longest tradition of artistic weaving in France. Various firms (Faure Frères, Wolf et Granger, Bodoy et Guitton, Marcoux et Chateauf, Staron et Meyer, Barnola and Neyret Frères) produced fabrics depicting family scenes, moral allegories,

creation of embroidered fabrics, as they did not entail the complexities of the weaving process.

It was not until the emergence of the Lyonnaise silk industry during the eighteenth century that weavers began to produce portraits. Lyon and its surrounding area was the heartland of industrial development and textile production in France, making it the natural spearhead of this new movement.

Various authors¹⁸ concur that it was not until the work of Philippe de Lasalle that the first portraits were produced, seemingly following work with his teacher Boucher to create the cards for the Gobelins tapestries¹⁹. Surviving examples include the portraits of Catherine II of Russia,²⁰ Queen Victoria of England,²¹ Louis XV of France²² and the Count and Countess of Savoy. Lasalle presented the bust of the figure in profile, framed within an oval medallion, inspired by the portraits of the era. The French bibliography on these decorative textiles is particularly extensive²³ and introduces us to figures such as Malpertuy and Carquillat, who were renowned specialists in Jacquard portraiture.

It was in the nineteenth century, with the introduction of the Jacquard system, that the art of textile portraiture – specifically in silks – emerged.

The first Jacquard portraits were commemorative pieces and highly exclusive, but wider success was achieved by French companies such as [Neyret Frères](#), from Saint Etienne,²⁴ which began to recreate highly realistic paintings of pastoral, romantic and court scenes, weaving reproductions of eighteenth and nineteenth century works, religious images, and commemorative portraits, many of them in the form of postcards and bookmarks, which were reinterpreted by various companies.

The industry's *savoir-faire* found its way into the ribbon trade for clothing and hat manufacturers and was soon evident in department stores; by 1900 it was common to see the designer's name stitched into the taping on a waste-band, and this has evolved into the elaborate designs we see today. In Catalonia we have the example of Perramon i Badia, a company founded in Manresa in 1926, of whose work an interesting selection is conserved at the CDMT.

historical events and copies of other artworks in the period 1890–1919. Some of the designs were rewoven towards the end of the 1920s, but production was far less

prolific than in the early inter-war period. The new pieces were sold as postcards, framed to decorate homes, or used to make cushions or bags.

Duc d'Orleans. Benet Malvey.
1863. Pau Rodon Amigó collection.
Badalona Museum .



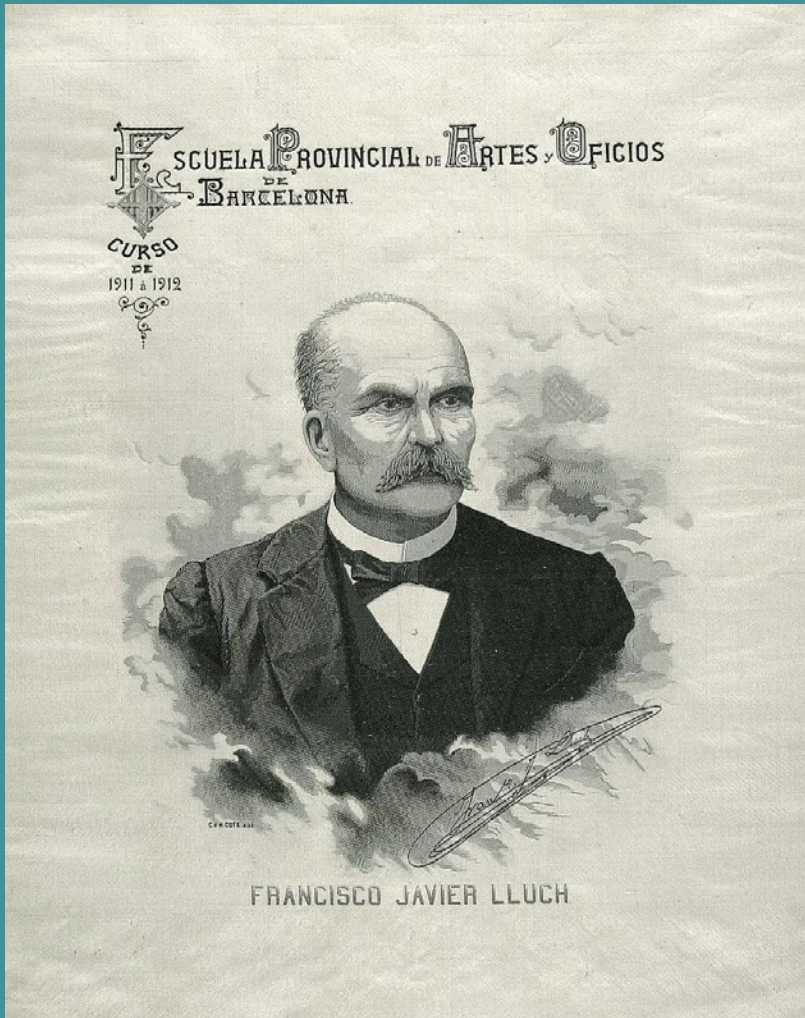
Artistic Jacquard weaving in Catalonia

25 Based on a photograph conserved at the Royal Palace in Aranjuez. In 1919, Josep Triadó donated the portraits of Isabella II, the Duke of Orleans and *La Primavera* to the FAD. The three images are published in the FAD's 1919 yearbook, p. 44 and 45.

26 The August Malvey collection included: a portrait of Philippe de Lasalle, by Reybaud; and the Josep Malvey collection: Philippe de Lasalle, Washington, produced by Mathevon and Bouvard, The Imperial Family (Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie) and Alexander Humboldt.

The success with which commemorative fabrics and woven silk portraits were met in France was soon enjoyed by Catalan weavers, who recognised the potential of the Jacquard mechanism for creating more artistic designs. These new textiles were not purely a commercial endeavour, nor were they produced in great quantities, as preparation was extremely costly, but the small number of pieces that were weaved in this period are highly representative of the style. The leading exponents of the technique, and descriptions of their work, are given below, while the Jacquard weaves produced at the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts will be covered in detail in a separate chapter.

The first name to mention is that of the silk merchant Benet Malvey i Piqué (1837-1892), who is regarded as the first Catalan creator of a Jacquard portrait. The most famous works drawn and cut by his own hand are the portraits of Isabella II of Spain, which he designed in 1862 at the age of 23, the Duke of Orleans (1863), and a female figure, entitled *La Primavera*, all of them weaved in silk. The quality of Malvey's products and his skill as an artist found favour with the Spanish monarchy, particularly after the unveiling of his portrait of Isabella II in 1862,²⁵ for which he received the Order of Charles III. Malvey, like many of his descendants, was also a collector of these fabrics.²⁶



▲ *Ntra Sra de los Desamparados*. Silk. C. i H. Cots. Duato Sales S. en C. Valencia, 1923. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum.

◀ Portrait of Francesc Xavier Lluç. Silk. Provincial School of Arts and Crafts of Barcelona, 1911–1912. CDMT 10721.

27 Who published the *Tratado teórico-práctico de la fabricación de tejidos*, in 1852, the first specialist publication of its type since the invention of the Jacquard system, to which a specific section is devoted.

28 Manjarrés refers to this portrait, but we have been unable to locate a surviving example. From MANJARRÉS, Ramon. *La Il·lustració Catalana*, 15-3-1890, pp. 69–70.

29 We assume that this was Josep Antoni Muntadas, founder of La España Industrial.

Francesc Xavier Lluç i Gros (1818-1889)²⁷, a technician and teacher at the Barcelona School of Industry and later a lecturer in textile theory and practice and applied drawing at the Provincial School of Arts and Crafts, created several Jacquard portraits, often at the School itself as a means of demonstrating the technique to his student. His finest work won him recognition as a member of the Order of Isabella the Catholic in 1871, as well as commissions for portraits of Isabella II of Spain²⁸ and Amadeo I of Savoy, which he drew and created the cutting design for himself, the weaving done by Eduard Reig. Some years later, in January 1877, he was also made a member of the Order of Charles III for his [portrait of Alfonso XII](#), for which he again created the original drawing and the Jacquard design, as a commission for the College of Silk Art in Barcelona, where it was manufactured in 1875-76. Lluç i Gros also designed the portraits of Fortuny and Josep Anton Muntadas,²⁹ as well as a number of other portraits (the subjects currently unknown) which he is known to have weaved at the Provincial School of Arts and Crafts of Barcelona, with the help of his students.

The artist, professor and textile theorist Camil Cots i Ferreri (1848-1934) was, in turn, commissioned to create a portrait of Francesc Xavier Lluç i



Portrait of Àngel Guimerà. Silk. Barcelona? Early twentieth century. CDMT 10829.



▲ Portrait of Maria Christina of Austria, Queen Regent of Spain. Silk. Monjo i Xirinachs. Later nineteenth century, early twentieth century. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum. [See more](#).

► Portrait of Alfonso XIII. Silk. C i H Cots. Late nineteenth century, early twentieth century. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum.



30 Signed by Camil and Higiní Cots. A silk fabric, using the sfumato technique characteristic of this form of textile, through the gradual transition from heavy to light stitching to create subtle effects of light and shade (one silk warp thread and two wefts, one white and one black).

31 The College often produced its invitations in Jacquard cloth. The CDMT has a surviving example, reg. no. 10714.

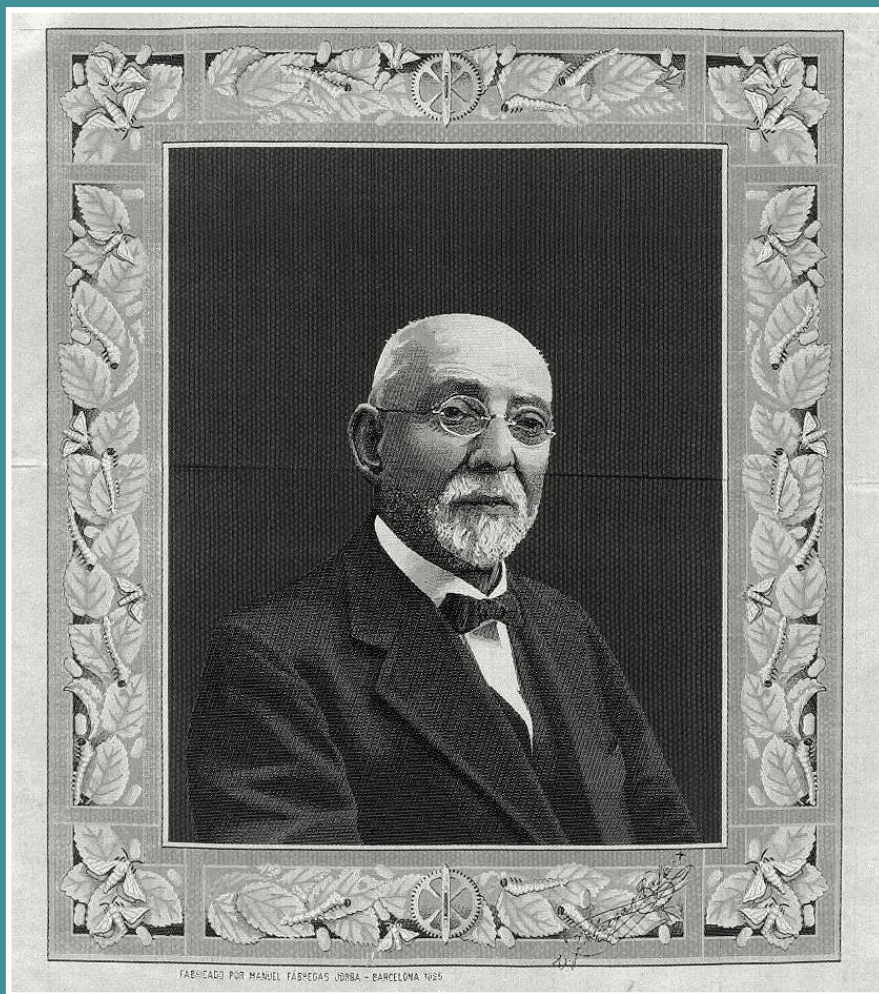
32 MOLAS, op. cit.

33 Molas Josep, "El dibuix en el teixit", *Industria Textil*, Barcelona, January 1924.

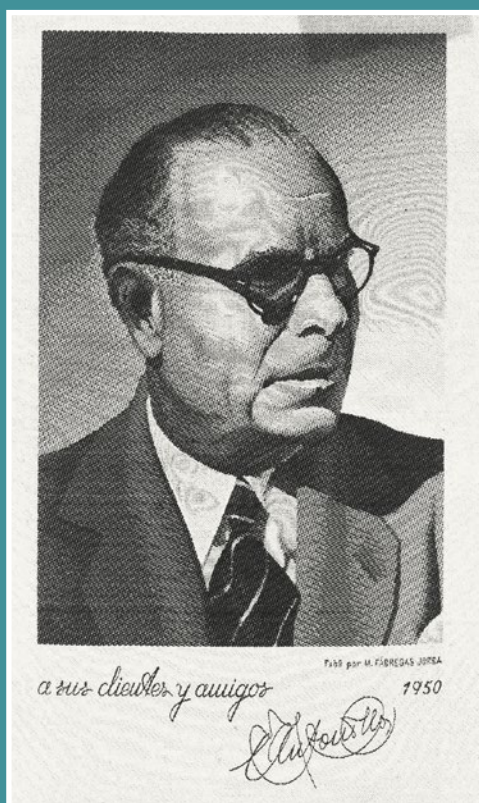
Gros, which he weaved together with his students at the Provincial School of Arts and Crafts over the course of the 1911-1912 academic year, as a tribute to his former teacher.³⁰ Cots also produced a portrait of Alfonso XIII, an invitation issued by the College of Silk Art,³¹ manufactured by the Vilumara silk firm in 1904, and a portrait of queen regent Maria Christina, weaved by Monjo i Xirinachs in Barcelona. He also created the design of *Our Lady of the Foresaken* for the Jacquard portrait *Coronacion Pontificia de Ntra. Sra. de los Desamparados*, weaved by M. Duato Sales in Valencia in May 1923.

Camil Cots, "a veteran among textile artists",³² said that to be a good artist one had to know exactly what a textile was. He knew from experience that it was essential to understand each of the operations involved in preparing the warp and weft, to know how to assemble and disassemble a Jacquard loom or similar Systems. He also knew that even this knowledge was not sufficient, and that the artist also had to be a skilled manipulator of pencil and brush, capable of giving his imagination free reign and translating it into the cutting design for the punch cards, "a difficult and complex operation that, in turn, requires a perfect understanding of textile composition".³³

Jacquard portraits and commemorative designs became common in Catalan textile circles, particularly in the industrial sector and at various textile and art colleges. Many factory owners considered it a sign of distinction – both for their



▲ Portrait of Gaietà Fàbregas Rafart. Silk. Manuel Fàbregas Jorba. Barcelona, 1925. CDMT 10727.



◀ Portrait of Antonio Mas. Silk. M. Fàbregas Jorba. Barcelona, 1950. CDMT 15279.



▲ Invitation, College of Silk Art in Barcelona, 1904. CDMT 10716.

◀ Medal for Professional Merit. Silk. Samaranch. Barcelona, 1945. CDMT 10723.

34 The cutting plan is conserved, measuring 170 x 130 cm, as is the silk cloth, measuring 17 x 11 cm. CDMT 15279.

35 Bearing the legend: ¡Arriba España! ¡FRANCO! ¡FRANCO! ¡FRANCO! BARCELONA 1939 AÑO DE LA VICTORIA.

36 The father of Joan Antoni Samaranch, a silk merchant.

37 CDMT 8850.

38 For example, *Immaculé conception*, CDMT 10747 and 11149; *Christ crucified* by Neyret Frères, CDMT 10840; *Mater Dolorosa*, by Neyret Frères, CDMT 10839; *SS Leon XIII*, a tribute to the Roubaix Technical Institute, CDMT 15107.

companies and for themselves – to produce artistic fabric designs and to offer them as gifts to their customers. For the professional textile colleges, this new style provided challenging practical training for their students and won them greater prestige.

One of the foremost proponents of the new style was the silk company of Manuel Fàbregas Jorba, originally founded by Gaietà Fàbregas Rafart in Mollet, which weaved at least three different Jacquard portraits. The CDMT collection includes a portrait of the company's founder, made by his son Manuel in 1925, and another piece dated 1950 showing the portrait of an unknown figure, signed and dedicated to *his customers and friends*.³⁴ Finally, there survives a portrait of Franco, drawn by Ferrater i Dordal and produced in 1939.³⁵

In May 1945, the textile firm Samaranch, S.A. produced a Jacquard portrait of Francesc Samaranch Castro³⁶ to commemorate his receipt of the Spanish government's Medal for Professional Merit, coinciding with his forty-fifth anniversary with the company.

It was also common for textile firms to reproduce well-known paintings. Francesc Coll- J. Ribot, for example, created a woven copy of Velázquez's *The Spinners* as a gift for customers and friends on the occasion of the 1929 International Exhibition³⁷. The Ribot firm even produced a special silk Jacquard to notify customers of its change of address.

Vda. Fernando Carné also produced a commemorative piece for the International Exhibition, designed by Ars Tèxtil (Gràcia i Ferraté) and punched by Manuel Ferrer, although it did not match the technical perfection of Coll i Ribot. (CDMT 1729)

Religious images were also a popular choice for Catalan producers of artistic textiles, as they were for French producers.³⁸ The most frequent representation



Mare de Déu de Montserrat.
Perramon y Badia, S.A. Silk.
Manresa, 1964. CDMT 10720.



La perla de Catalunya. Silk. Early twentieth century. Pau Rodon Amigó collection. Badalona Museum

► *Ecce Homo*, after Guido Reni. Silk. Neyret Frères, early twentieth century. CDMT 11238. [See detail.](#)

▼ *Mater Dolorosa*, after Guido Reni. Silk. France? Early twentieth century. CDMT 10839.



39 A copy is conserved at the Badalona Museum in the Pau Rodon Amigó collection of artistic textiles.

40 CDMT 10720.

41 Guido Reni's *Ecce Homo* has been the subject of numerous interpretations by different companies. The Museum of Industrial Arts in Saint Etienne holds a copy, after Guido Reni, 1913. The Lleida Museum has a very similar piece, produced in tapestry.

42 CDMT 10829, MHS 1722.

was the *Mare de Déu de Montserrat*, but a variety of other designs were also produced, some of them in colour and of unknown authorship. The most celebrated examples are *La perla de Catalunya N.S. de Montserrat* (designer and weaver unknown),³⁹ *N.S. de Montserrat*, by Amadeu Cudisó, and Tiepolo's *The Immaculate Conception*, produced at the Escola Industrial de Sabadell; and *Regina pacis ora pro nobis Montserrat* and *Virgen del Pilar Zaragoza*, manufactured by Perramon i Badia (Manresa 1964).⁴⁰ The authorship of the *Mater Dolorosa* and *Ecce Homo*⁴¹ conserved in Catalan collections is uncertain; while the provenance of the originals is undoubtedly French, the versions that survive in Catalonia are likely to be reproductions of the French pieces.

Another piece whose origins have not been traced is the portrait of Àngel Guimerà.⁴² The fabric was clearly produced in Catalonia, and although no name can be put to its creator, it is thought to have been woven in Sabadell, as it appeared in an exhibition at the city's History Museum in 1974 that showcased the most impressive examples of artistic Jacquard weaves produced at the School of Industry, together with the *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa* referred to above. Each of these pieces, created in silk, displays a great level of technical skill.

While the School of Industry in Sabadell took a great interest in the creation of artistic textiles, its counterpart in Terrassa produced very few pieces of which

Portrait of Alfonso XIII. Silk. Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts, 1915. CDMT 9018.



43 Acquired by the Badalona Museum, containing 131 Jacquard fabrics. Notable pieces include: *El primer pas*, *La Primavera* and the *Duke of Orleans* by Benet Malvehy, *El viarany perillós*, *Joan of Arc*, the *Virgin Mary*, *Jesus crucified*, *Flora*, Murillo's *Immaculate Conception*, portraits of Wagner, Tolstoy, Felix Faure and Paul Deroulède, various reproductions of paintings by Alonso Pérez, such as *La Pavane* or *The Fencing Lesson*, and the portraits of Maura, Romanones and Canalejas, produced at the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts.

44 RODON FONT, Camil. "El retrat aplicat al teixit". *Joventut textile*, pp. 171–172 and 176–177.

45 RODON FONT, Camil.

46 "Notas sueltas". *Cataluña Textil*, vol. IX, March 1915, no. 102. Badalona, p. 44.

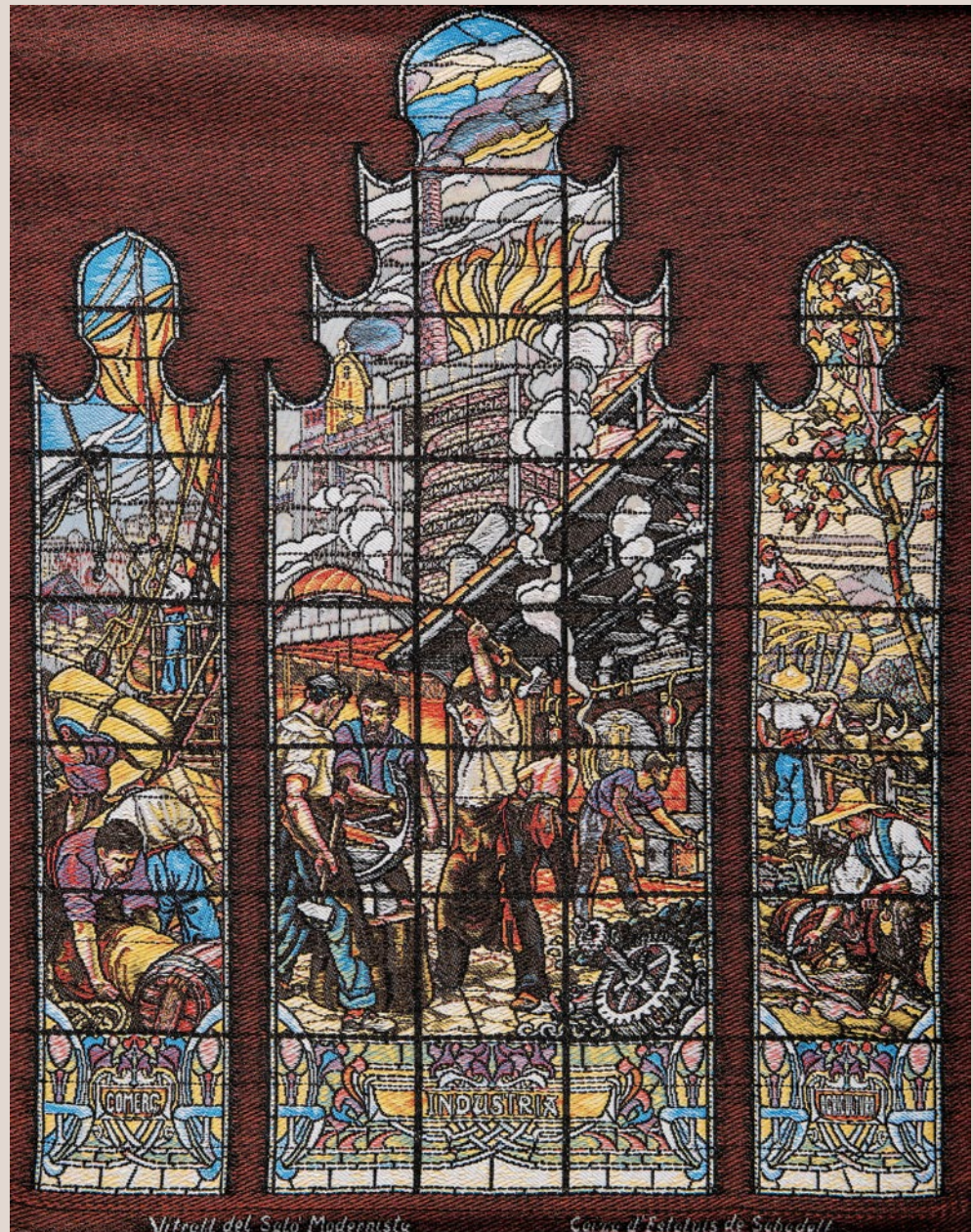
we are aware. One of these is a commemorative cotton Jacquard fabric created to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the School of Textile Engineers, 1904-1954. (CDMT 10708)

The first move towards the academic study and appreciation of these unique Catalan fabrics was made by Pau Rodon and his son Camil. Pau, the founder of the Badalona Textile School and the journal *Cataluña Textil*, published an extensive body of notes on various Jacquard pieces and the technique itself and owned a sizeable collection that he had amassed over the years, which was eventually bound into a parchment volume entitled *Colecció de Teixits Artístichs*, which is now part of the Badalona Museum collection.⁴³

Camil Rodon published in *Joventut*⁴⁴ that there were two basic techniques for creating these masterpieces: the first used the taffeta base – for the cutting design – as the starting point for the shading, where the drawing effects were produced by the weft. The second technique used a satin base and the drawing effects were produced by the warp and the weft. In the first case, the portraits could not be created with the necessary complexity, and the final pieces were flat in appearance, lacking expressiveness and realism; in the second case, the relief effect and the nuances created by the shading gave the portraits a far more lifelike appearance, of photographic quality. The satin used for the second technique was weaved with a warp thread of white silk and a black silk weft with hidden stitches, giving the final design a range of tones from the deepest black through a scale of greys to pure white; the impeccable graduation of tones was reminiscent of a photographic image.

Most of the artistic Jacquard fabrics produced in Catalonia were created using the first technique, and would be dismissed by Camil Rodon as *devoid of any effect of life*. By contrast, the textile portrait of Alfonso XIII,⁴⁵ designed by Narcís Giralt and produced at the Sabadell School of Arts and Crafts, was prized for the quality of the drawing, the accurate proportions and the unquestionable likeness. Even a cursory glance reveals an appreciable difference in quality between Giralt's work and the portraits of Alfonso XII, by Lluch, and Alfonso XIII, by Cots. The portrait of Alfonso XIII, weaved in Sabadell, was acquired for his personal collection by Pau Rodon, who said of the new piece: "In pride of place at the Badalona Textile School hangs the large portrait of Alfonso XIII, weaved in silk by the students of the Sabadell School of Industry, and laid out for cutting by the hand of the intelligent professor and director of that school, our distinguished and esteemed Don Narciso Giralt".⁴⁶

Reproduction of the *modernista* stained glass of the Caixa Sabadell building. Polyester. 2008. CDMT 22840.



47 The period that saw the creation of the Benet Malhey's portrait of Isabella II of Spain and the portrait of Ferran Casablanca by Agrupacions Professionals Narcís Giralt. 48 Examples are conserved at the CDMT and Sabadell History Museum.

The chronology of Catalan artistic Jacquard fabrics takes in a little over half a century, from 1862 until 1974, approximately.⁴⁷ Production of these portraits and commemorative fabrics woven in silk eventually ceased; their preparation and weaving were complex and expensive processes, and the fashion for portraits and commemorative designs had passed. One of the last artistic fabrics to be produced in Catalonia was created to mark the 150th anniversary of the Caixa Sabadell savings bank, depicting the stained glass windows of the hall in its *modernista* building; the work, in polyester, was commissioned by the bank's president at the time, Salvador Soley i Junoy, and directed by Àngel Martínez in 2008.⁴⁸ ●