

Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > [CATALÀ](#)

From a modernist design to artisan lace



■ Neus Ribas

On Sunday 10 May, Terrassa was host to the twenty-eighth Lacemakers' Day, an event organized by the Catalan Association of Lacemakers and held each year in a different Catalan city. On this special day, the CDMT and Arenys de Mar Museum, together with the Flor Alba Association of Lacemakers of Arenys de Mar, started a project to use a modernist design preserved at the CDMT to make a tablecloth border in artisan lace.

The design of the draughtsmen Gràcia and Ferrater (1908-1910), in the possession of the CDMT, is a modernist style drawing in white gouache with a diagonal composition of roses linked together with small stalks.

Glòria Bilbeny, an expert card puncher, drew a border based on this original design and punched the pattern. When the pattern was ready, Assumpta Riera of the Flor Alba Association of Lacemakers of Arenys de Mar, made the lace which Nuria Coll (another member of the Flor

Alba Association) then sewed onto the linen fabric. To make this tablecloth the three experts put in a total of 100 hours of work.

This little project is a look into the past, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, when factories produced magnificent pieces in a new aesthetic language for the bourgeoisie, who used them to adorn their houses. This combination of textile heritage and craftsmanship was presented on 10 May in Terrassa, and it can now be seen in a video posted on Arenys de Mar Museum's [YouTube](#) channel. ■

Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > [ESPAÑOL](#)

Traditional textiles of Cantabria

Rafael Fernández Fernández.
Published by Textil Santanderina.

ISBN: 978-84-95742-80-3

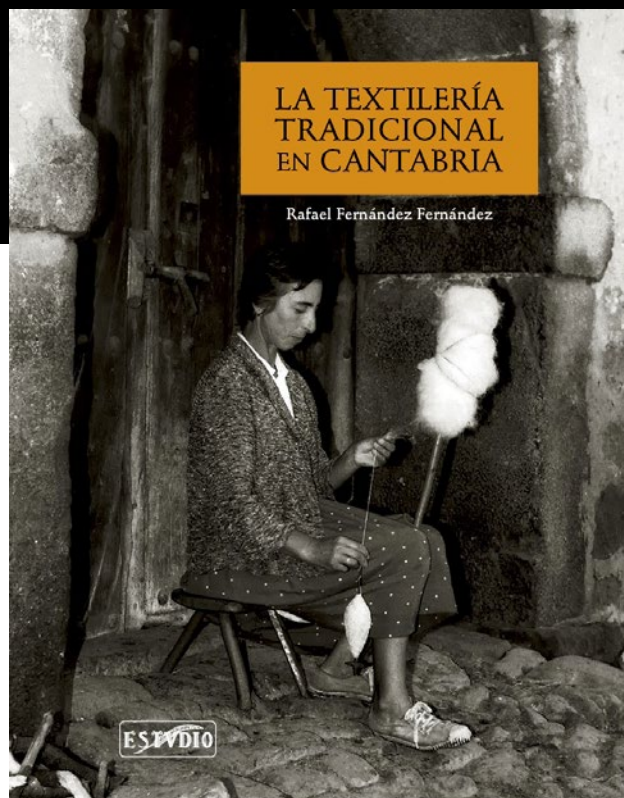
■ Assumpta Dangla

This study is the result of an extensive research project conducted over three decades by the textile expert Rafael Fernández. For many years, the author has visited the most remote regions of Cantabria to document and gain first-hand experience of traditional textile techniques, which manage to survive – even on a very small scale – in the north of Spain.

The book is divided into chapters in order to draw attention to this rich textile legacy, which has been passed down for generations. The author's first question is "How?": he answers by carefully detailing the materials and processes involved in textile production, from the procurement of the raw materials to the finished product. A photographic section contains hitherto unpublished images of weavers engaged in the laborious task of spinning to produce furnishings and fabrics.

In the second part, the author asks the questions "Who, when, where?", in a journey through the history of textiles, from its early days, through the Neolithic, the Bronze Age, and the Roman Empire up until the present.

At the end of this demanding but rewarding project, the author has added a series of interesting appendices. Here he stresses the



significance of the profession of spinning and weaving, carried out by so many anonymous people over the centuries in the lands of Cantabria. The author's study is based on first-hand documentation and oral memory, and offers an ethnological account of a profession and its people. Thanks to his experience and training and his excellent powers of expression, he offers a highly interesting portrait of the most varied aspects of textiles and its creators. It is a story that rescues the memory of so many people dedicated to an art which, although virtually obsolete today, is brought back to life in this book. ■

Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > CATALÀ

CHINA: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Andrew Bolton et al.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015

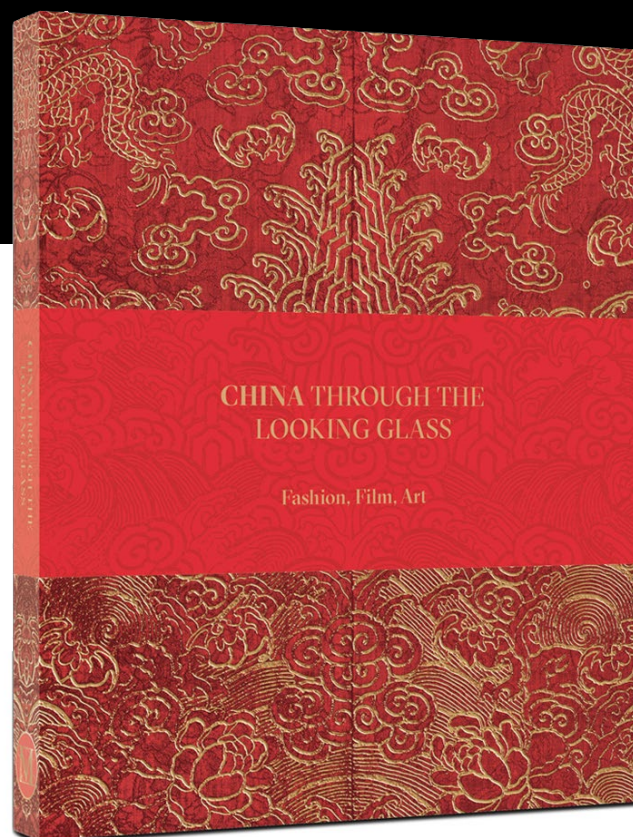
ISBN: 978-0-300-21112-2

■ Eulàlia Morral

“Like moon in the water, image on a mirror / It comes and goes, with no inherent reality”. The couplet, written by the poet Pei Xiu, and quoted by the filmmaker Wong Kar Wai in his brief introduction to this new volume, perfectly captures the essence of a journey into the long-standing Western fascination with Chinese aesthetics. Our guide is Wong Kar Wai, artistic director, together with Met curator Andrew Bolton, designer Nathan Crowley, and the photographer Platon, the creative team behind the exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in spring 2015, which has been beautifully captured in this guide.

The exhibition centres around the theme of the looking glass, and the masterful selection of exhibits are presented here as if mirror images; on one page the original piece, on the opposite page the creation or creations it inspired. The photographs are works of art in their own right and are unspoiled by textual adornment (the details are given in a separate chapter), transporting us to that fantastical realm to which cinema has made make such a distinct contribution, from *Son of the Dragon* to *Shanghai Express*, *Farewell my Concubine* and *The Last Emperor*.

Mirroring the exhibition structure, the book is divided into two parts: *Emperor to Citizen* (imperial, nationalist and communist China) and *Empire of Signs* (bodies, spaces and enigmatic objects). Porcelain, calligraphy, decorative objects and Chinese formal dress from the last few centuries are joined by paintings, advertisements, perfumes, and haute couture pieces by some of the foremost names in contemporary and twentieth-century Western fashion: Balenciaga, Christian



Dior, Alexander McQueen, Vivienne Tam, Jean Paul Gaultier, Yves Saint Laurent, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Dries van Noten, Paul Poiret, Isabel Toledo, Jean Patou...

Short texts complementing the exhibition's main focus are provided by the rest of the team: “A Dialogue Between East and West” (Maxwell K. Hearn), “Toward an Aesthetic of Surfaces” (Andrew Bolton), “A Chamber of Whispers” (Adam Geczy), “Fashioning China” (Harold Koda), “Imagery of Chinese Dress” (Mei Mei Rado) and “Cinema’s Virtual Chinas” (Homay King).

There is no scope in this brief review to comment on each of the texts in detail. Nevertheless, Andrew Bolton – unquestionably the exhibition's *alma mater* – discusses the eternal game of mirrors through which East and West eye one another, engaging in a mutual transformation that fails to penetrate beyond the surface. Adam Geczy, meanwhile, examines the many faces

of *Orientalism*, moving from domination to exchange, finally arriving at interpenetration. This is by some distance the most philosophical of the texts, and is all the most fascinating for it, defining the concept of *Transorientalism* as the combination of three facets whose precise interplay is informed by trade, tourism, production (working conditions are appalling in much of what we consider the ancient East, a fact attributable not only to Western companies but also to the governments themselves) and reinterpretation through design, primarily in the fashion sector. One might argue, in fact, that the East continues to be *orientalized*, driven by the currents of globalization.

Harold Koda examines the assimilation of Chinese imagery in the West, through discoveries, trade links and artistic movements. Mei Mei Rado discusses traditional Chinese dress, considering how it has been portrayed in engravings and paintings, how it has evolved since 1911, and how

it is evoked by contemporary Chinese artists. Finally, Homa King looks at the virtual China we see recreated in cinema: “the lens through which many of us first discover unknown places; artists and designers who take inspiration from Chinese aesthetics often do so through cinema, rather than through reality”.

Those who still have questions about the exhibition’s themes will be greatly illuminated by Andrew Bolton’s interview with John Galliano, who explains his lifelong affinity with China, first through the lens of Hollywood and later first-hand, through extensive international travel that has also taken him to Mongolia and Russia. There is an interesting comparison to be made between the creative process – interiorization and abstraction – and meditation, and the interview gives a fascinating insight into the designer’s ability to absorb and deconstruct original ideas to create original forms that, through new, do not altogether mask their sources. ■