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INDIANES

***Llibre de mostres de la fàbrica de Josep Anton Fàbregas, Igualada, 1815 /
Llibre de colors de Josep Anton Fàbregas, Igualada 1813***

ISBN: 978-84-617-6457-0. Igualada, 2016

■ **Sílvia Ventosa**

Calicos – in Catalan, *indianes* – sparked a revolutionary change in the way homes were furnished and decorated, emerging alongside sweeping changes in protoindustrial textile manufacturing and the general use of fabrics, and even changes in architecture, urban planning and the Catalan economy in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. These printed cotton fabrics were an ideal match for the European love of oriental exoticism. As well as brightly coloured, calicos were resistant to water and light and met the new hygiene standards demanded by modern European society. The attractiveness of the fabrics and the rapid turnover of new designs set new trends, and the possibility of mass production meant that the market could grow exponentially. There were calicos for all tastes and pockets, this cross-class accessibility making them the definitive fabrics of the first preindustrial fashion.

Recent years have seen renewed interest in calicos, which can be found in numerous private and public collections across Catalonia. In 2006, the Premià de Mar Textile Printing Museum opened an exhibition that documents the entire calico printing process, and in 2007, the Sabadell History Museum organised the temporary exhibition *Indianes, estampats* (Calicos, printed fabrics). In 2011, specialists in a variety of disciplines brought their knowledge of calico to a wider audience through the seminar *La indústria de les indianes a Barcelona. 1730-1850*, organised by the Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona. Participants learned about many different aspects of the fabrics and their production, from their use for clothing and interiors to manufacturing



techniques and the impact of economic and urban changes over the period in question. Following on from the seminar, in 2013 the Barcelona City History Museum organised the exhibition *Indianes, 1736-1847. Els orígens de la Barcelona industrial*. When the Barcelona Design Museum was opened in 2014, it showcased a small but representative sample of its collection of calicos as part of the permanent exhibition *Extraordinàries, Col·leccions d'arts decoratives i arts d'autor (segles III-XX)*, which is still open to the public.

In this book, which looks at the work of the Igualada manufacturer *José Anton Fàbregas*, we find a wealth of new details about the fascinating world of calicos. The book is divided into two parts. The first, *Llibre de mostres de la fàbrica de Josep Anton Fàbregas* (Sample book from

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the factory of Josep Anton Fàbregas) contains twenty-two sketches of calicos decorated with plant motifs, birds and insects, Biblical scenes and representations from mythology. It includes two designs that feature fortifications and walled cities. Motifs are large and attractively designed in reds, yellows, browns and blacks, produced using natural dyes. The second part is a facsimile edition of the *Llibre de colors de Josep Anton Fàbregas* (Josep Anton Fàbregas colour book), which preceded Carlos Ardit's *Tratado teórico y práctico de la fabricación de pintados ó indianas*, published in 1819, reproduces a manuscript of forty-eight formulas that provides valuable new information for research into dyeing materials and mordants, colour names and the various dyeing processes.

The introduction by Isabel Campi discusses the practical and aesthetic qualities of these printed cottons. Assumpta Dangla, meanwhile, looks at the history of the first calico manufacturers in Catalonia and describes the complex production process and natural dyeing techniques. She

also examines the importance of aesthetically appealing decoration and the need to address new themes to match the changing tastes of successive eras.

The original sketches and manuscript are conserved in the private collection of Lluís Roset. In 2013, the Combalia family showed a selection of sketches from the *Llibre de mostres* and a reproduction of the *Llibre de colors* at the Portal del Llevador exhibition hall in Igualada. The display was the starting point for this painstakingly edited book, published in three languages and featuring beautiful photography by Manel Armengol. Support was provided by the Barcelona Provincial Council and the Design History Foundation.

The question we ask now is whether calicos are once again becoming fashionable. It could be argued that they never truly lost their appeal, particularly among scholars, and it is far from impossible that the next great trend may be a return to printed fabrics with bold floral designs and vibrant colours. ■

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1st Colloquium of Textile and Fashion Researchers

■ Neus Ribas

On 17 November the Terrassa Textile Museum and Documentation Centre will host the 1st Colloquium of Textile and Fashion Researchers, an event that aims to bring the work of researchers in these fields to the awareness of a wider public. The programme is wide-reaching, reflecting a desire to showcase work from the widest possible range of disciplines: textile history, history of fashion, sociology and semiotics, textile art, textile innovation, sustainability, theatre and film costume, and specific techniques such as embroidery, printing, lace-making and tapestry. This first edition of the event has been organised with Spanish researchers in mind, while subsequent editions will target a more international audience.

The Colloquium will begin with an address by Dr Lesley Miller, Senior Curator of Textiles and Fashion at the Victoria and Albert Museum

in London and Professor of Dress and Textile History at the University of Glasgow, on the subject “Interwoven stories: 40 years of textile research. A personal vision”. The day will continue with a series of thematically grouped talks.

The Colloquium is organised by the Fundació Història del Disseny (Design History Foundation) and its affiliated Textile and Fashion Research Group, which was formed in 2016 as a means of bringing together researchers in the many disciplines linked to the world of fashion and textiles, in particular art, anthropology, history and communication. Members include important figures from universities, museums, the culture sector and other fields.

Designers, students, researchers and enthusiasts will all be welcome at the CDMT on 17 November 2017. ■



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Temporary exhibition

Inventing tradition. Clothing and identities

Museu Valencià d'Etnologia, Valencia
Until 30th April 2017

■ **Sílvia Ventosa**

The curator Sunsió García Zanón, from the Valencian Museum of Ethnology, and the researcher Xavier Rausell built this exhibition around the theory of Hobsbawm and Ranger set out in their defining work, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), which brought about a radical change in the way we study traditions, which can be viewed as relics of the past often have unique stories to tell. This idea informs the exhibition's focus on the relativity of these "fixed" assets of our cultural heritage, such as festivals and traditional dress, particularly in a society like that of Valencia where identity is rooted to an extraordinary extent in popular tradition, a fact that is apparent in fundamental areas of social and economic life and in the symbols that typify the region. The willingness to show that "traditional" Valencian dress reflects the tastes of a particular social class at a given point in history – of the people who instigated these trends and others who imitated them, imbuing them with notions of community – is unquestionably an act of daring in a society that values and strives to conserve its traditional festivals. Yet it is exactly the evolution and transformation of customs that make traditions so vital and diverse. The exhibition features examples of the most emblematic local dress, worn by the peasant farmers of the Horta of Valencia, which has undergone transformations through individual changes and the influence of the predominant styles of middle classes. As the curators explain, "The exhibition tells us about how the notion of a Valencian identity first emerged, symbolised in garments that are considered to represent the essence of the Valencian Country. It tells us about



the influences that this essence has received from socioeconomic and political movements, from international events, and simply from changes in popular fashions that have been moulded to new uses by Valencian men and women". For the specific case of Valencia, they take the example of the eighteenth century, which was the inspiration for designers of traditional dress in the 1980s, who were looking for a past in which to identify themselves.

The exhibition is divided into three spaces. The first reproduces a museum storage room as exhibition display, showcasing various garments arranged by type. The second represents a catwalk along which visitors walk between the exhibits, marking an interesting change of roles and perspective. To the left are chronologically ordered groups of mannequins and rows of folding chairs, laid out as if for spectators at a fashion show. The display progresses from the 1830s to the 1980s, comparing the fashions of

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each period with the traditional dress that was popular at the time. To the right of the catwalk a selection of fashion accessories, documents and garments from each of these periods. The third space contains original garments from are displayed the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that have been used as theatre costume and yet remain in an excellent state of conservation. The exhibition concludes with a display of the latest creations of the Valencian designer Francis Montesinos, who reimagines popular dress for the haute couture market. The models are accompanied by a video report on his September 2016 show at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in Madrid, titled “Montesinos Heritage”, which highlights the unique characteristics of his creative journey and the strength of his Valencian roots.

The exhibition catalogue contains articles by a variety of authors on fashion, traditional clothing and identity, and textile restoration and conservation, which set out the theoretical background to the exhibits. It also contains a precise inventory of the items on display. Each article has been put together with the greatest scientific rigour, and considerable care has been taken to select the most representative exhibits. The narrative is an audacious one, arguing that what we believe to be immutable traditions may have been created or invented for a particular reason, often with a clearly defined beginning (and perhaps also an end). The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue mark a watershed in the study of popular customs and, in particular, of the significance of traditional clothing in contemporary society. ■