Queen of the Insects: The Art of the Butterfly, December 11, 2009-May 9, 2010

Transformative, ephemeral, and otherworldly, the iridescent and fragile beauty of the butterfly has enchanted designers and artisans around the world for hundreds of years. Always fashionable, the butterfly motif has adorned a wide variety of design objects, from porcelain and prints to jewelry and textiles. Fragility of the butterfly perfectly suited to the textile arts, akin in materiality and texture. Luminous silks, brocades and metallic threads, alight the surface of the textile, like a butterfly on the wind.

The works on display illustrate the universal impulse to capture the fleeting art of the butterfly. Juxtaposed with its often decorative usage in western design, the traditional symbolism of the butterfly in Asian art is explored and decoded as a design inspiration and as a material in itself. The human desire to preserve this resplendent and potent image of metamorphosis and rebirth has made it a universal design icon.

To capture the essence of this elusive creature has proved a challenge to many-- from artists to poets, musicians, and scientists. The careful observation and study of the natural world undertaken by all these professions alike, is a principal imparted on many a design student in their foundation studies, both for the RISD student today, and as was the case in 1917 as recorded in the text Jewelry Making and Design. An Illustrated text book for Teachers, Students of Design, and Craft Workers in Jewelry.

"Just as soon as the student is able to look at any part or unit of the butterfly and see in it endless possibilities in design he will never be hampered for ideas, he will see more possibilities in a single motif than ever before, and his pencil will not work fast enough to record these ideas."

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Japanese
Katagami (hand-cut paper stencil), 1800s
Mulberry paper (kozo); persimmon stain
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 05.111
Japanese
*Stencil, 1800s*
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.452

Japanese
*Stencil, 1800s*
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.460

Japanese
*Stencil, 1800s*
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.475

Japanese
*Stencil, 1800s*
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.782
Chinese
*Robe*, 1800s
Silk; tapestry weave (ko’ssu), painted
Gift of Miss Elizabeth Casey  1989.037.4

Damien Hirst, English, b. 1965
Adrian Nyman, American, b. 1965
Polyester, cotton; knit, printed
Museum Purchase  2009.61.2

Vlisco, Dutch, 1846 - present
*Eclat de Nature*, 2009
Cotton; machine wax print
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund  2009.68.1

Japanese
*Stencil*, 1800s
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Gift of Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe  21.431
Japanese
*Stencil*, 1800s
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Gift of Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe  21.438

Indonesian; Javanese
*Sarong*, late 1800s
Silk; wax resist printed (batik)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke  26.406

Chinese
*Sleeve band*, 1800s
Silk, embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  34.661
Chinese
*Sleeve band*, 1800s
Silk; embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  34.665

Chinese
*Sleeve band*, 1800s
silk; embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  34.667
Chinese
*Sleeve band*, 1800s
Silk; embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  34.673

Chinese
*Sleeve band*, 1800s
Silk; embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  34.680
Chinese
*Sleeve band*, 1800s
Silk; embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 34.689

Chinese
*Robe*, 1821-1851
Silk satin weave with silk and wrapped-metallic embroidery; applied silk satin sleeve bands and ribbon trim (huataozi)
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 35.403

Chinese
*Robe*, 1800s
Silk; satin, embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 35.405
Chinese
Robe, 1800s
Silk; tapestry weave (ko’ssu), painted
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  35.414

Chinese
Skirt, ca. 1835
Silk, cotton; damask weave, embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  35.419

Chinese
Skirt, early 1800s-mid 1800s
Silk, cotton; damask weave, embroidered
Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich  35.421

Chinese
Coat, 1800s
Silk; crepe, embroidered
Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf  37.044

Japanese; Edo
Textile, 1800-1849
Cotton; resist dyed
Gift of William Ely  37.288
Chinese
*Kingfisher wedding headdress*, 1800s
Metal, silk, kingfisher feather, semi-precious stones; feather cloisonne
Gift of Marshall H. Gould  44.048.1

Iida Shinshichi, Japanese, active mid 1800s-mid 1900s
Takashimaya
*Gown*
Plain weave silk, embroidered, kumihimo (cord), and fuki (padded hem)
Gift of the Heirs of Mrs. Zechariah Chafee  46.053

Japanese
*Textile*, 1900s
Bequest of Mrs. Frank A. Sayles  47.725A

French
*Textile Length*, 1930-1940
Silk, metallic yarn; crepe, printed
Museum Works of Art Fund  51.363
French
*Textile length*, 1930-1940
Silk, metallic yarn; brocade
Museum Works of Art Fund 51.394

Indian; Chinese
*Bouse*, early 1800s
Silk; embroidered
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.280

Liem Soen Tjaij (Tjay), probably, b. China, late 19th-mid-20th century
*Sarong*, 1905 - 1915
Cotton; wax resist print (batik)
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.480

Chinese
*Young Girl Holding a Butterfly Cutout Suspended from a Pole*, 1800s
Chinese gongshu; painted, ink
Gift of Professor Albert A. Bennett 56.040.6
Possibly; French
*Fan*, ca. 1890
Silk, bone; painted
Gift of Mrs. Clarkson A. Collins, Jr.  56.138.77

Chinese
*Serving dish*, Late 1800s
Porcelain; enamel
Bequest of Amy Wilson Heart  58.103.1

Chinese
*Butterfly Tureen Cover*, late 1800s
Porcelain; polychrome enamels and gold
Bequest of Amy Wilson Heart  58.103.10

Chinese
*Butterfly Tureen*, late 1800s
Porcelain, polychrome enamels, and gold
Bequest of Amy Wilson Heart  58.103.11
Chinese
*Butterfly Serving Dish*, 1800s
Porcelain; enamel
Bequest of Amy Wilson Heart  58.103.7

Chinese
*Bowl*, 1800s
Porcelain; enamel
Bequest of Amy Wilson Heart  58.103.8

American
*Hair ornament*, 1920
Celluloid in the style of tortoise shell; molded
Gift of Mrs. Eugene L. Klein  58.168.55

American
*Hair ornament*, ca. 1900
Celluloid in the style of jet; molded
Gift of Mrs. Kenneth Shaw Safe  63.010.41
French
*Textile*, ca. 1800
Cotton; hand block printed, madder
The Francis Crosby Whitehead Collection 68.128.263A

English
*Wrapper*, 1800s
Paper; embossed, painted
Walter H. Kimball Fund 80.254.17

Japanese
*Stencil*, 1800s
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Gift of Mrs. Russell Dickinson 81.166.29

Japanese
*Stencil*, 1800s
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Transfer from RISD Library 84.016.3
Japanese
_Sencil_, 1800s
Mulberry paper, persimmon stain
Transfer from RISD Library  84.016.4

Hanae Mori, Japanese, b. 1926
_Dress_, ca. 1981
Silk; chiffon, printed
Gift of Mrs. M. A. Pendergast  85.102.3

Chinese
_Brooch_, early 1900s
Metal, kingfisher feathers; feather cloisonné
Gift of Theodore Francis Green  D21.468