

From Paris to Providence: Fashion, Art, and the Tirocchi Dressmakers' Shop,
January 12, 2001-April 8, 2001

From 1915 to 1947, Anna and Laura Tirocchi, immigrant sisters from Italy, operated the A. & L. Tirocchi dressmakers' shop in an historic Victorian mansion on Providence's Broadway. Across the shop's doorstep came women from many of the city's prominent families. They ordered the latest in Paris fashion tailored from the most luxurious imported textiles; either custom-made, in the early days, or more often after 1924, exclusive ready-to-wear. Through the back door came the young women who stitched the clothing: skilled women from the nearby Italian American communities of Federal Hill and Silver Lake.

When you enter the exhibition, you step into the ambience of the Tirocchi shop. As with all the arts, fashion and textile design reflect the aesthetic of their time. The fashions and textiles chosen by the Tirocchi sisters, found in the still-intact shop in 1989, reflect advancing modernism in the art world of the early 20th century. Couturiers and textile designers participated actively in movements from cubism to the International Style, bringing a new and irresistible élan to fashion.

This time capsule of a shop flourished in Providence from 1915 to 1947, when fortunes were being made in the textile, jewelry, machine parts, rubber, and oil industries; when increasing freedom and the right to vote were won by American women and were reflected in new clothing styles; and when two aspiring dressmakers and their young Italian-American employees found fulfillment in bringing high fashion from Paris to Providence.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

French

Dress panel, ca. 1925

Silk net embellished with sequins and glass beads

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.57

This textile is a "robe," a length of silk that was embroidered and beaded by the manufacturer in advance, ready for the dressmaker to cut out and sew into a "chemise"-style 1920s dress. Large-scale moderne floral medallions combine with an allover ground pattern found in many Chinese silks in this "robe."



RISD MUSEUM

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
F. Ducharne Silk Co., Inc., French
Dress, ca. 1920
Wool; twill, embroidered with wool
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.169.50

This dress, which has seen much wear, was found in a closet with other Tirocchi family garments and may have belonged to Laura Tirocchi Cella. The heavy “peasant-style” embroidery around the neckline harks back to the work of Paul Poiret in the early 1910s.



RISD MUSEUM

Probably; American

Dress, ca. 1924

Silk; plain weave, embroidered with beads

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.169.33

In 1924, Anna Tirocchi made a decision to carry high-end ready-to-wear dresses to please her clients, who were becoming impatient with the fittings and time commitments that went into custom-made dresses. Even so, not all Tirocchi clients were willing to dress in the most modern or avant-garde styles. Many preferred more conservative designs. This ready-to-wear dress illustrates that ornament styles from the 1910s were still being worn in the mid-1920s.



French; Probably

Overdress, ca. 1919

Silk; net, embroidered with sequins, glass beads, and silver metallic thread

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.7

A tag attached to the garment dates the piece to a pre-1920 inventory taken in the Tirocchi shop. The style of the dress, with its gathered side panels, dates to the late 1910s.



RISD MUSEUM

Paul Poiret, French, 1879-1944

"Persian" coat, ca. 1926

Silk; velvet, and metallic thread; plain weave; embroidered

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.16

A repeating pattern of heraldic birds and the tree of life lends a vaguely Byzantine air to this evening coat, probably designed by Paul Poiret, one of the Parisian couturiers who maintained an interest in exoticism throughout his career.



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Japonist Dress, ca. 1927

Silk, glass, micro bugle beads, mirrored glass bugle beads; machine lace, embroidered

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.5

Stylized waterfall or fountain motifs are common in Art Deco design. Sometimes, as in this dress, the flow of the water is depicted in a very Japanese manner. This dress was probably custom-made in the Tirocchi shop.



RISD MUSEUM

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
Dress with Exotic Foliage Design, ca. 1926
Silk; net, embroidered with sequins and beads
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.2

This beaded dress, meant for a gala evening party, shows how the simple “chemise” form could be covered with decorative images like a painter’s canvas. Here the designer of the dress has used exotic foliage as the central motif, rendered in brilliant color that reflects modernist ideas.



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
F. Ducharne Silk Co., Inc., French
Length, 1921
Silk, wrapped metallic yarn; cut warp pile
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.48

Michel Dubost headed François Ducharne’s design school in Paris during the 1920s. This spectacular velvet may have been styled by Dubost after a Turkish velvet pattern, which he updated with brilliant modernist purple. The design was a favorite of Ducharne, who gave a piece of it in gold and orange to the Museum of Historic Textiles in Lyon in 1922.



House of Rodier, French, est. 1848
Length, 1924
Silk; plain weave, printed and embroidered with metallic thread
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.46

Rodier was one of the largest French manufacturers of textiles. This piece, which employs “Persian” motifs, was one of many designs produced by Rodier just before the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, the famous Paris exposition of 1925 whose name gave rise to the term “Art Deco.”



RISD MUSEUM

French

Length with Tiger Pelt Motifs, ca. 1925

Silk; velvet, printed

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.71

This velvet shows an African influence, a source favored by modernist artists as they sought to employ in their art the nobility they saw in non-Western cultures. Here the designer has used a tiger pelt as background for a band of shield forms bearing wild animals on a border print intended for a “chemise” dress.



William H. Taylor, American

Length with Chinese Motifs, ca. 1925

Silk; velvet, printed

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.49

Chinoiserie designs did not always incorporate Chinese-style landscape or figural imagery. This textile uses traditional Chinese fret and medallion motifs to evoke the exotic.



Harry Angelo Co., American

Opera Coat, ca. 1930

Silk; velvet, embroidered with beads; fur collar

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.13



RISD MUSEUM

French

Length with Pacific Islands Motifs, ca. 1925

Silk and metallic thread; jacquard weave

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.53

No exotic location was too far away to serve as inspiration for modernist design. This beautiful matelassé double cloth with its elegant puckers has a lively pattern perhaps inspired by Pacific Islands tapa cloth, which was being collected for the first time in the early 20th century and shown in exhibitions of “oriental” art.



French; Probably

Pusher Lace Panel, before 1918

Silk

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.098.24



RISD MUSEUM

House of Rodier, French, est. 1848

Suit, ca. 1926

Wool; twill

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.17

This simple suit is constructed from a textile typical of those produced at Rodier's woolen factory in northern France, where hand looms were still used to make fabrics with abstract landscape patterns.



William H. Taylor, American

Lace Length, ca. 1925

Rayon; leavers lace

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.098.45

This lace length has the moderne rose derived from Charles Rennie Mackintosh's designs of the early 20th century. Compare it to the lace in the first section of this exhibition. Dated to before 1918, it is evidence that the moderne was well known in America long before the Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes of 1925.



RISD MUSEUM

Jean Patou, French, 1887 - 1936

William H. Taylor, American

Sport Suit, ca. 1929

Silk; plain weave, and rayon; gauze, embroidered and appliquéd

Gift of Dr. L. J. Cella 1991.169.14

The sport suit was a development of the early 1920s, when women began to enter the job market in a major way, to drive, to vote, and in their leisure to play golf and other active sports. Here the French manufacturer borrowed from designs by the popular couturier Jean Patou (a favorite of the Tirocchi clientele) to create a sport suit of silk and rayon with collage trim reminiscent of cubism.



Lucien Lelong, French, 1889-1958

Coat, ca. 1926

Silk; voided velvet, fur collar

Gift of Dr. L. J. Cella 1991.169.8

Lucien Lelong created a simple coat from a fabulous modernist textile. A velvet with long and short pile has been discharge printed in a bright modernist color scheme with swirls reminiscent of paintings by Italian futurist artists.



RISD MUSEUM

Harry Angelo Co., American
Textile Length, ca. 1930
Ribbed wool blend textile, discharge and over printed
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.7

This textile also employs discharge printing, but here the discharge paste has been brushed on to create the abstract swirl pattern.



Probably; French
Length, ca. 1920
Silk; net, embroidered with beads and sequins
Gift of Edward Cella 1991.122.3



French
Length with Abstract Pattern of Birds' Wings, ca. 1926
Silk and metallic thread; plain weave, supplementary weft patterning, discharge printed
Gift of Edward Cella 1999.7.3

This wonderful abstract pattern is a masterpiece of modernist textile design. Its creator took full advantage of the ability of the jacquard loom on which it was woven to lift each warp thread independently, resulting in a sprinkling of silver all over the textile. After weaving, the whole piece was dyed the blue ground color. Finally, a bleaching paste was combined with newly developed dyes to “discharge” or remove the ground color and, in the same operation, print the pattern in vibrant oranges, reds, etc.



RISD MUSEUM

French

Length with Geometric Motif, ca. 1926

Rayon; plain weave, brocaded

Gift of Dr. L. J. Cella 1991.121.1

A simple plain-weave rayon is brocaded in a geometric pattern typical of the work of modernists such as Mondrian.



Lucien Lelong, French, 1889-1958

Dress and slip, ca. 1930

Silk; plain weave, embroidered with paillettes

Gift of Edward Cella 1991.169.1



RISD MUSEUM

Probably; French
Border, ca. 1925
Cotton; net, embroidered with bugle beads
Gift of Edward Cella 1991.122.2

In this border the designer plays with abstract geometric forms in an animated pattern, analogous to paintings such as Henri Le Fauconnier's *Mountaineers Attacked by Bears*, 1910-12, which hangs in this Museum's 20th-Century Galleries at the other end of the building.



French
Length with Pattern of Willows and Rippled Pools, ca. 1930
Silk; jacquard weave
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.52

The weeping willow and rippled pool of water depicted in this design are rendered in a style reminiscent of Japanese landscapes.



French
Length, 1931
Silk and rayon; velvet
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.17



RISD MUSEUM

Border, ca. 1918
Silk; net, embroidered with beads
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.169.71

This border shows abstracted shapes and bold colors inspired by cubism and fauvist painting.



Probably; French
Length with Chinoiserie Motifs, before 1918
Silk; damask
Gift of Edward Cella 1999.7.4

The use of traditional Chinese motifs, or of Western motifs rendered in a Chinese style, was common in Western art and design from the 18th century onward. Works that incorporated these elements, known as “chinoiserie,” remained popular throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



French; Probably
Skirt Panel, ca. 1914
Silk; net, embroidered and appliquéd
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.31

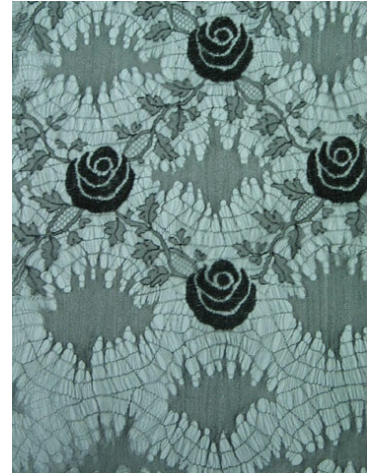
Although this skirt panel dates from about 1914, the use of shiny metallic surfaces and geometric ornament presages the moderne and “Machine-Age” styles of the 1920s and 30s. It is also a perfect illustration of pre-World War I opulence in fashion.



RISD MUSEUM

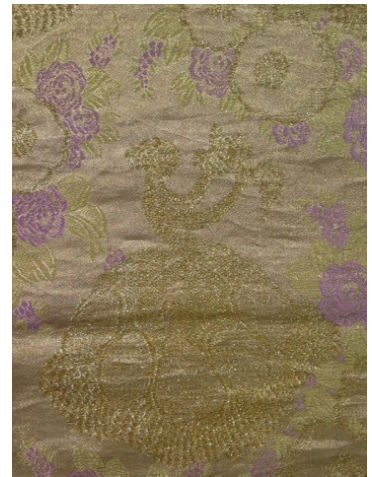
Mortimer Lee, American
Lace Panel, ca. 1920
Silk; leavers lace
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.098.30

Several motifs popularized before 1910 reappeared throughout the decades before World War II. Perhaps the most common example of this phenomenon is the stylized rose seen in this lace length from around 1920. First found around 1900 in work by Scottish artist Charles Rennie Mackintosh, this moderne rose also became popular in Vienna and was later adopted in France as the "Poiret rose."



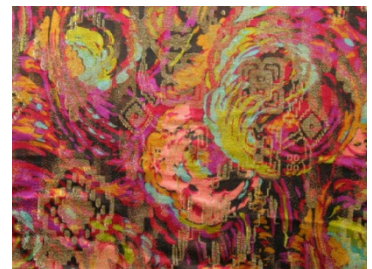
F. Ducharne Silk Co., Inc., French
Length, ca. 1930-40
Silk; velvet, discharge printed
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Cella III 2000.62.1

Many graphic artists worked in several related fields, such as textile design and fashion illustration. Charles Martin, André Marty, Paul Iribe, George Barbier, and others were able to adapt their own styles and aesthetic ideals to the needs of the manufacturers for whom they worked. This fabric is reminiscent of a Barbier fashion illustration, but seems calculated to appeal to a conservative client.



French
Length with Swirls and "Oriental" Motifs, ca. 1926
Silk and gold metallic thread; plain weave, supplementary weft
patterning, discharge printed
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Cella III 2000.62.2

The multiple patterning techniques used in this textile are perfectly suited to the straight silhouette of the mid-1920s. Simply cut dresses with few seams showed off complicated textiles to their best advantage.



RISD MUSEUM

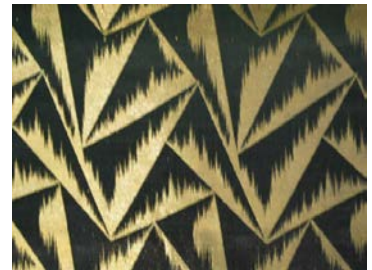
J. Remond & Cie, French, early 20th century
Length with Pattern of Swirls and Irregular Shapes, ca. 1926
Silk; plain weave with supplementary continuous gold metallic
patterning wefts, discharge-printed
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.51

East meets West, as Japanese-style floral and geometric motifs
familiar from kimono fabrics are combined in this textile with the
strong colors used by fauvist painters and popularized in the 1910s.



Japanese
A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
Length with Pattern of Triangles, ca. 1920
Rayon and gold metallic thread; jacquard weave
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.72

Commerce and artistic influences flowed between East and West.
Japanese manufacturers pursued the market for luxury fabrics in
Europe and America. The narrow width of this cloth suggests that it
was woven in Japan, while the Jazz Age triangle pattern and its
presence in the Tirocchi shop both indicate that it was made for the
Western market.



Maurice Lefranc & cie, French
"Robe" with North African Motif, 1926
Silk; velvet, embroidered with silk; silk tassel
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.39

This "robe" (pre-embellished fabric length meant to be cut out and
sewn into a chemise dress) shows North African influence in its
brilliant coloring, geometric pattern, and tassel ornament. "Robes"
were a convenience for dressmakers, who could obtain an elaborate
finish by sewing two ready-embroidered panels together instead of
having to bead and embroider each one individually.

RISD MUSEUM

Bianchini, Férier, French, est. 1888

Apparel Fabric, 1926

Silk, wrapped metallic yarn; plain weave, continuous supplementary weft, roller printed

Gift of Edward Cella 1999.7.7



French

Dress panel, ca. 1925

Silk plain weave with silk embroidery

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.36

African art is the source for the embroidery pattern on this “robe” for an afternoon dress.



Probably; French

Maginnis & Thomas, American

Border, ca. 1918

Cotton; net, machine embroidered

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.098.50

Titled “Meteor” in the vendor’s invoice, the spirals and swirling shapes on this dress border show influences from pre-World War I futurist art and point the way to the syncopated patterns of the Jazz Age. The amoeba shapes in particular seem close to the work of artist Jean Arp.



RISD MUSEUM

French

Length, ca. 1920 - 40

Silk; velvet

Gift of Edward Cella 1991.122.1



French

Apparel Textile Length, 1915 - 1918

Silk jacquard weave

Gift of Edward Cella 1999.7.8

This fabric reflects the popularity of the Ballets Russes, which performed in Paris for the first time in 1909 and created a sensation with its exotic costumes and set designs. The bright colors and orientalist designs influenced the decorative arts and especially fashion throughout the 1910s and into the 1920s. The bright oranges and greens are typical of orientalism.



French

Length, ca. 1930

Silk and cotton; velvet

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.20



RISD MUSEUM

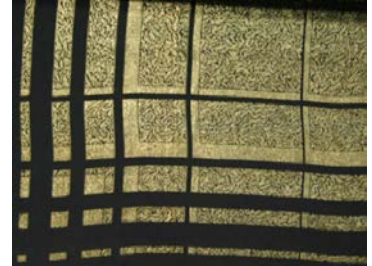
House of Rodier, French, est. 1848

Scarf, ca. 1926

Silk and metallic thread; brocaded

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.1

The weaving firm of Rodier was famous for its geometrically patterned silk scarves, often in black decorated with metallic yarns. This scarf, with its edges not yet rolled and sewn, has a small rivet in one corner bearing the Rodier insignia, proving that it came from this source.



Length, ca. 1930-40

Silk; plain weave, printed

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Cella III 2000.62.8



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Beret, ca. 1934

cotton

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.68C

Several American designers created sportswear with the life-style of the active young American woman in mind.



Tuck-Wite, American

Hat, ca. 1934

Wool; felt, appliquéd, and straw; plaited, wool-felt appliqué

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.69C

While the fabrics chosen for this beach costume (wool jersey knit and wool felt) may seem hot and heavy to our contemporary sensibilities, the revealing cut and close fit of the swimsuit were distinctly modern



RISD MUSEUM

in its day. The coat displays modernist leanings in the stylized tropical leaf and flower decoration and the bright color combination.

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Playsuit, ca. 1934

Plain weave cotton with wood buttons

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.68A

Several American designers created sportswear with the life-style of the active young American woman in mind. This crinkled cotton playsuit allowed freedom of motion and ease of maintenance, yet the cover-up skirt provided a nod to a society that still frowned upon women who wore in public garments considered too masculine.



F. Ducharne Silk Co., Inc., French

Length, ca. 1925-1940

Silk, velvet; discharged and printed

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.24



F. Ducharne Silk Co., Inc., French

Length with Bouquet Pattern, ca. 1935

Silk; plain weave, discharge printed

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.10

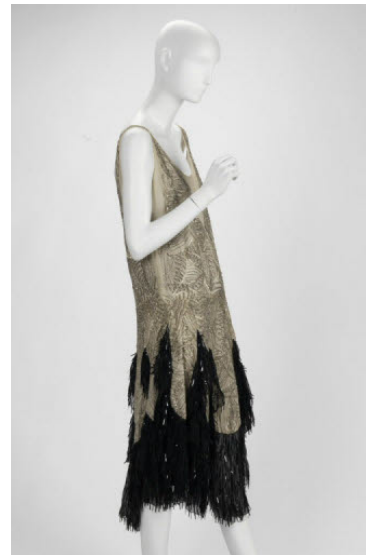


RISD MUSEUM

F. Ducharne Silk Co., Inc., French
Length with Small Flowers, ca. 1930-40
Silk, metallic thread; discharge-printed
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.34



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
Anna Tirocchi, American, 1874-1947
Evening dress, ca. 1926
Silk; bugle bead; paillette
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.4



RISD MUSEUM

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

French

Dress, ca. 1925

Silk, cellophane sequins, jet beads; net, embroidered

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.3

Probably made from a pre-sequined “robe” in the Tirocchi shop, this dress shows an effective use of the moderne flower as decoration on a simple tubular form. At the same time, overlapping sequins all over the dress create a shiny surface that looks forward to the Machine Age aesthetic.



French

"Robe", ca. 1926

Silk; velvet embroidered with glass beads and bosses

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.40

This “robe” is particularly Viennese in inspiration with its abstract flowers arranged in a tight grid. It is especially easy in this “robe” to see the outline of the chemise dress into which it would have been sewn in the Tirocchi shop.

John A. Ellis, American, Mid 19th Century

Etagère, ca. 1860

Rosewood; marble; plate glass

Gift of Dr. L. J. Cella 1991.072

RISD MUSEUM

French

Length with Red and Green Ribbons, ca. 1926

Silk; printed

Gift of L. J. Cella Jr. 1991.123.3



Length with Egyptian Motifs, ca. 1922

Rayon; plain weave, printed

Gift of Dr. L. J. Cella 1991.121.2



Paul Poiret, French, 1879-1944

Chemise Dress (Restyled), ca. 1926

Silk; velvet, embroidered with sequins in exotic pattern

Gift of Edward Cella 1991.169.25

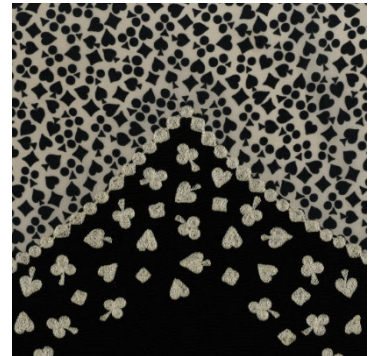


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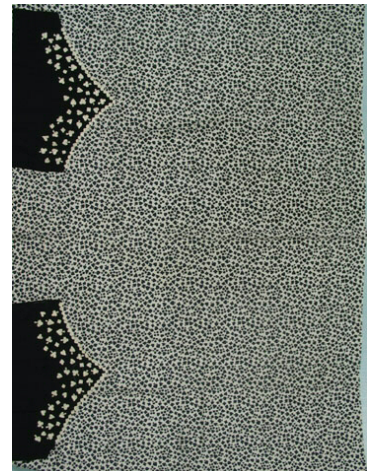
Harry Angelo Co., American
A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
Robe and Suit Ensemble, 1929
Silk; plain weave, printed and embroidered
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.8



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
Harry Angelo Co., American
Robe, 1929
Silk; plain weave, printed and embroidered
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.8A



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
Harry Angelo Co., American
Length, 1929
Silk; plain weave, printed and embroidered
Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.8B



RISD MUSEUM

French

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Harry Angelo Co., American

Dress, 1929

Silk; plain weave, printed and embroidered

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.8C

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Harry Angelo Co., American

Jacket, 1929

Silk; plain weave, printed and embroidered

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.8D

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Wedding Dress, 1932

Silk; satin

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Panfilio Basilico 1998.6.1



American

Sketch, ca. 1927

Watercolor, oil, and graphite on paper

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.28

RISD MUSEUM

French

Opera coat, ca. 1930

Silk, sequins; velvet, machine embroidery

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.14



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Black sequined dress with silver diamond detail, ca. 1925

Silk, imitation jet, glass bugle beads, stamped metal sequins,
rhinestones; plain weave, embroidered, studded

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.42



RISD MUSEUM

Vienna Knit Art, Austrian
A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947
Sport suit, ca.1928
Wool; machine knit
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.63

The intarsia-knit “skyscraper” motif of this sport suit linked the modernist aesthetic in art with a modernist “sportif” ideal of femininity.



Thomas Ustick Walter, American, 1804-1887
U.S. Senate Desk, ca. 1860
Oak
Gift of Dr. L. J. Cella 1991.074B

Harry Angelo Co., American
Sketch, 1926
Mimeograph, hand-colored
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.30A

RISD MUSEUM

Harry Angelo Co., American
"Robe", 1926
Silk
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.30B

This "robe" is composed of several pre-embroidered panels attached to a buckram band. In the Tirocchi shop, curators found this sketch, which depicts a coat made from this "robe" and is meant to show the dressmakers how to put the pieces together.

The pattern on the taffeta "robe" reflects the influence of the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshops), which produced modernist fashions using a vocabulary of grids and abstract flowers akin to the embroidered ornament on this coat.

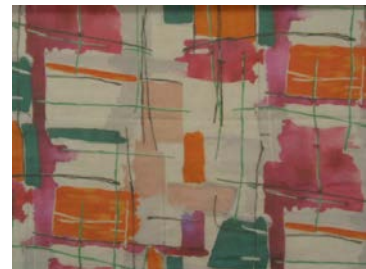


Harry Angelo Co., American
"Robe", 1929
Silk; appliquéd and embroidered
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.37

This "robe" with its abstract leaves is as much a collage as those being produced by cubist painters in this period.



American
Length of Cubist Motif, ca. 1930's
Silk; plain weave, discharge-printed
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.56



RISD MUSEUM

Probably; American
Length with Ovals, ca. 1927
Silk; plain weave; chemical burnout
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.45



French
Length, ca. 1930
Silk; velvet
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.19



French
Length, ca. 1930
Silk; velvet
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.18



RISD MUSEUM

French

Levers lace, ca. 1926

Silk; leavers lace

Gift of Edward Cella 1999.7.9

This lace displays layers of patterning that echo the “bizarre” motifs of early 18th-century silks, superimposed on the simple stripe produced by the Leaver’s lace machine on which it was woven.



French

Length with Moderne Rose Motif, ca. 1920

Silk and metallic thread; brocaded

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.23

This gold-and-black fabric incorporates the moderne rose in its design.



French

Length, ca. 1925

Silk; velvet

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.16



RISD MUSEUM

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Dress, ca. 1926

Silk; sequin; bead and rhinestone

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.6



French

Length, ca. 1920-40

Silk; velvet

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.50



RISD MUSEUM

House of Redfern, American, 20th century

John Poynter, English

Dress with Moderne Flower Motif, ca. 1927

Silk; plain weave, embroidered with beads and silk and silver metallic thread

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.59

John Poynter designed the abstract geometric pattern for this “chemise” dress around 1927. Its simple shape is embellished by intricate beading in a pattern based on the moderne flower.



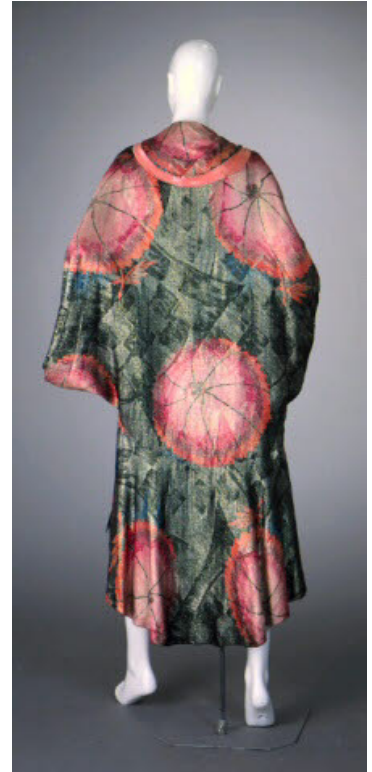
RISD MUSEUM

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Evening wrap, ca. 1925

Silk and silver-metallic thread; jacquard weave, discharge-printed;
and silk satin

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.15



French

Length, ca. 1930

Silk and metallic thread; brocaded

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.26

A lightweight, filmy fabric, this gold-encrusted silk is the epitome of luxury, the watchword of the French textile industry in the 1920s and 30s. Its shiny surface interrupted only by tiny “lips” of color aptly expresses the Machine Age in all its sleekness and glitter.



Harry Angelo Co., American

Length with Tulip Pattern, ca. 1925

Silk with metallic thread; plain weave with supplementary
discontinuous patterning wefts

Gift of L. J. Cella 1991.123.54



RISD MUSEUM

Harry Angelo Co., American
Length, 1931

Silk and gold metallic thread; jacquard weave, discharge-printed
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.27

Here the moderne flower has acquired hard edges of gold thread, a nod to the Machine Age aesthetic that was coming into play about the time of its purchase by the Tirocchi sisters in 1931.



French
Length with Fern Leaf Pattern, ca. 1925
Silk; chiffon, printed
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.47



French
Harry Angelo Co., American
Opera coat, 1931
Silk; velvet, embroidered with beads, sequins, and rhinestones
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.10

The sparkling beads, sequins, and rhinestones that embellish this evening wrap contrast with the light-devouring surface of the velvet ground fabric. Many designers interested in classical models preferred to enliven their work by providing for a play of light across surfaces, rather than by using patterned textiles.



RISD MUSEUM

Coat, ca. 1926

Silk; velvet

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.169.49



A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Dress, ca. 1932

Silk; plain weave, embroidered with sequins

Gift of Edward Cella 1991.169.4

Compare this evening dress from the early 1930s to the brilliantly decorated “chemise” dresses of the 1920s. Its form-fitting cut is delicately enhanced by a simple scatter of beading on the bodice.



RISD MUSEUM

The Misses Briganti, American
Madeleine Vionnet, French, 1876-1975
Dress, 1932
Silk
Gift of Dr. L. J. Cella 1991.169.19

This dress is a copy after designs by couturiere Madeleine Vionnet. The bias-cut panels of satin are combined in a cubist-influenced collage that achieves color differences through the way in which the orientation of the satin fabric catches the light.



French
Dress, 1930s
Silk; embroidered with paillettes
Gift of Edward Cella 1991.169.48



RISD MUSEUM

Harry Angelo Co., American
Opera coat, ca. 1932
Silk; satin, embroidered with beads; silk fringe
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.8

Gleaming white and silver, this simply cut and perfectly proportioned evening wrap is a triumph of modernist classicism. In repose, the heavy silk fringe falls to the ankle, encasing the body in a column of white. In motion, the fringe parts to reveal glimpses of the gown and body beneath.



RISD MUSEUM

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Dress, ca. 1934

Rayon; Leavers lace, discharge-printed

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.18



Dress, ca. 1934

Silk; plain weave

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.19

Simple and form-fitting, this classic dress with its full skirt is an example of an evening gown made for dancing. Its bright red color calls to mind the brilliant scarlets worn by flamenco dancers, which came into fashion with the arrival in the United States and Europe of Latin American dances such as the tango.



RISD MUSEUM

A. & L. Tirocchi, American, 1913-1947

Day Dress, ca. 1926

Printed silk plain weave and cotton machine lace

Gift of Edward Cella 1991.169.6



RISD MUSEUM

Elsa Schiaparelli, Italian, 1890 - 1973

Sport Suit, ca. 1930

Sweater: wool; knit; chemise: wool and silk; plain weave

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.62

Knitted dresses and separates began to come into favor soon after the tubular silhouette of the 1920s was established. Knitted garments have an inherent give that makes them more comfortable and easier in fit than traditionally styled garments of nonstretch fabric. This particular set was inspired by the work of Elsa Schiaparelli, who made knitted garments and trompe-l'oeil designs fashionable.



Edward Molyneux, English, 1894 - 1974

Russell Manufacturing Company, American, early 20th century

Resort ensemble, 1933

Wool; jersey

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.67

English designer Edward Molyneux created the design for this sailor-suit outfit at the height of the vogue for "beach pyjamas," when seaside resorts were becoming more popular in the 1920s and 30s. The design was then imprinted and the garments cut and sewn in New York. The fact that these pieces remained unsold in the shop inventory may say more about the conservative nature of the Tirocchi clientele in 1933 than about Providence fashion in general, although the matching jacket did find a home with a client.



RISD MUSEUM

Tuck-Wite, American
Ruth Belmont, american
Beach set, 1930
Wool; felt, appliqué, and straw; plaited, wool-felt appliqué
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.69

While the fabrics chosen for this beach costume (wool jersey knit and wool felt) may seem hot and heavy to our contemporary sensibilities, the revealing cut and close fit of the swimsuit were distinctly modern in its day. The coat displays modernist leanings in the stylized tropical leaf and flower decoration and the bright color combination.



French
Length, ca. 1930
Silk; velvet
Gift of L. J. Cella III 1991.123.15



RISD MUSEUM

Rosemonde, French, 20th century

Harry Angelo Co., American

Dress, 1930

Silk; plain weave, embroidered with jet and glass beads, and
rhinestones

Gift of L. J. Cella III 1990.129.1

