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# The Charleston Museum



Press Release

## Fall Textile Exhibits Schedule

First full rotation for the Museum's new Historic Textiles Gallery



Charleston, SC - August 8, 2011 - The Charleston Museum is pleased to announce the exhibition rotation schedule for its new Historic Textiles Gallery. This exhibit space will feature four separate exhibits opening in the Fall of 2011; details for each follow. The schedule begins with *Botanical Quilts: Chintz Appliqué in the 19th Century* on November 5. *Coat Check* follows on November 12, then, opening November 19, is *Fashion Plates: Illustrating History's Latest Styles*. The final exhibit in the series opens on December 7, Pearl Harbor Day, with "*We Have Just Begun to Fight!*": *Textiles from World War II*. For more information, including related programs, guests may visit the Museum's upcoming exhibits page at [www.charlestonmuseum.org/exhibits-upcoming](http://www.charlestonmuseum.org/exhibits-upcoming) or call (843) 722-2996.

### *Botanical Quilts: Chintz Appliqué in the 19th Century*

November 5, 2011 - April 22, 2012

Charleston has a long and venerable quilt making history. One of the most stunning techniques, *broderie perse* or chintz appliqué, consisted of fabulous floral and botanical printed fabrics imported from India, England and Europe. The quilt was made by cutting up these luxurious textiles and then reapplying the motifs to a larger fabric, carefully stitching around each element. Quiltmakers could create a stunning tree of life, a graceful floral basket or an album quilt of many different designs. *Botanical Quilts* examines the many different botanically-inspired quilts that graced the beds of Lowcountry residents throughout the 19th century.



One of the most stunning pieces in *Botanical Quilts* is an elaborate *Tree of Life* quilt (pictured above), probably made by Margaret Eliza Seyle Burges 1833. The tree abounds with flowers, leaves as well as birds and butterflies, each individually hand-appliquéd to the backing. Pictured left is one of the earliest quilts in the



exhibit, a floral medallion quilt, c. 1815, with *Trophy of Arms* centerpiece and impressive floral borders. The maker was possibly Mary Withers Read (c. 1791-1820), wife of John Harleston Read of Charleston. A design often seen in Charleston quilts is exemplified by a *Basket of Flowers* medallion quilt, c. 1840, from the Aiken family of Charleston. Even the basket itself was created from a delicate vine print and the border around the medallion is a ring of colorful flowers. A later chintz appliqué style is represented by an album quilt consisting of thirty-six blocks, each a different botanical print, many signed by their makers, 1847-1848. It was made by family and friends of the Chapman family, Blackville, South Carolina.

### Coat Check

November 12, 2011 - March 4, 2012

Just in time for cooler weather, *Coat Check* will display historic outerwear - coats, capes, cloaks, shawls, jackets - worn in Charleston in the past 200 years. From fur coats to delicate embroidered shawls, these garments were the finishing touch on a fashionable outfit. Even in the moderate Lowcountry climate, the winter months required a warm cover-up and fall or spring evenings might have needed a lighter wrap. *Coat Check* explores men's, women's and children's outerwear with an eye to fashion as well as practicality.



*Coat Check* highlights include two couture pieces - an elegant evening coat, made by designer Mariano Fortuny, c.1920, of his trademark stenciled velvet and a black velvet evening coat (pictured left) with beaded ornamentation designed by the couture house of Worth in Paris, c. 1912. Also selected is a fur coat worn by Charleston author Josephine Pinckney in the 1930s. Men's outerwear ranges from the elaborate, such as Benjamin Porter Fraser's silk tailcoat, c. 1820, embellished with embroidered rice plants and the South Carolina state seal on the tails, to the more utilitarian, as seen with a heavy sheepskin coat worn by Charlestonian Motte Alston Read on his Texas ranch c. 1893. Pictured above is a smartly tailored blue wool cape with green plaid wool lining, early 20th century, worn by Rose Pringle Ravenel (1850-1943) of Charleston. Lighter garments include a delicate lace shawl, worn by Charlotte Drayton Manigault in early 19th century and an Assuit shawl, covered with thousands of silver foil strips in a beautiful Art Deco design, c. 1920.

### Fashion Plates: Illustrating History's Latest Styles, 1760s-1920s

November 19, 2011 - May 6, 2012

Once the most important resource for current styles, fashion plates are now a valuable source for historic research. These plates appeared in many publications, such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, *La Belle Assemblée*, *Les Modes Parisiennes* and *Ackermann's Repository of Arts* among others. Essentially, fashion plates did not exist before the French Revolution began in 1789, though the Museum does have several rare hand-tinted fashion illustrations dating to the 1760s. It has been suggested that the sudden influx of French influence - as aristocrats rushed to escape the Revolution - catapulted the art of fashion designing and especially the production of fashion plates into a thriving business. For many years, these images would be the arbiters of elegance. Dress makers or even amateur home-sewers would use the illustration as their guide; dress patterns were not widely available until the latter half of the 19th century.





*Fashion Plates* will exhibit a range of examples held in the Museum Archives and pair select examples with fashion accessories from the textiles collection. One of the Museum's earliest plates (pictured above), the work of Nickolaus Heideloff, dates from 1794 and depicts a side view of a woman wearing an empire style dress with short train. Her hair is dressed with several, large plumes and she is holding a closed fan. Pictured left is a French fan that would have been the height of fashion in the 1790s. It is intricately engraved on silk with

classical figures surrounded with sewn-on sequins or spangles. The ivory sticks and guards are inlaid with silver and gilt foil.

Another early illustration, possibly engraved by William Hopwood, circa 1835, shows two women dressed in green. While green was a very popular fashion color and is found all around us in nature, it was not easily achieved through natural dyes. For example, Scheeles green involved an arsenic sulfide process which was quite hazardous to the dyers and even to the wearers since the pigment could become airborne when damp. A safe, synthetic green dye was not available until the 1860s. The shoe pictured below is remarkably similar to the ones in the Hopwood plate and dates from the same time. The sharply squared toe of the shoe was a new style for 1835, and side lacing replaced front lacing around 1830. The shoe was called a gaiter boot when made of fabric and "foxed" with leather. Our example could have been worn by Harriet Porcher Gaillard Stoney (1798-1863) of Charleston.



### ***"We Have Just Begun to Fight!": Textiles from World War II*** December 7, 2011 - February 5, 2012

This December 7th marks the 70th Anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the official entrance of the United States into World War II. In commemoration of that fateful day, The Charleston Museum presents uniforms and textiles relevant to the Pacific War. We strive to honor the men and women who served throughout the war, on far-off shores and on the homefront, by telling the stories of these Americans through their personal objects.



*"We Have Just Begun to Fight!"* will include a U.S. Army Air Corps flight jacket (pictured above) with blood chits or escape flags sewn in. It was worn by Charlestonian Jimmy Holcombe, who flew air-sea rescue missions in the China-Burma-India Theatre. Visitors will see a U.S. Navy uniform worn by C. Harrington Bissell of Charleston while serving with Admiral Halsey's fleet in the Pacific, as well as a woman's Red Cross uniform (pictured left), worn by Mary Elinor Waterhouse Hoyler of Beaufort. Mary Elinor



volunteered at home while her husband, Lt. Hamilton Hoyler, USMC, served in the Pacific. He was at Pearl Harbor and she didn't know his fate for six months.

### About the Photography

Each image within this press release represents a Charleston Museum collection piece and should not be reproduced without permission. We are happy to provide print-quality images and a wider variety upon request.

### About The Charleston Museum

The Charleston Museum, founded in 1773, is America's first museum. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located along [Charleston's Museum Mile](#). Holding the most extensive collection of South Carolina cultural and scientific collections in the nation, it also owns two National Historic Landmark houses, the [Heyward-Washington House](#) (1772) and the [Joseph Manigault House](#) (1803), as well as the Dill Sanctuary, a 580-acre wildlife preserve. Museum hours are Monday-Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1-5 p.m. Museum admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

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