QUILTS

THE GATHERING AND THE GIFT

SELECTIONS
FROM THE HORTON COLLECTION
1780–1910

JUNE 2–JUNE 14, 1987
LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

In 1968 Betty Horton began gathering a comprehensive collection of American and European quilts. Forty-nine pieces from this extraordinary collection have now been given to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to mark the establishment of the American Quilt Research Center. The sixteen pieces selected for *Quilts: The Gathering and the Gift* are representative of the Horton Collection's diversity, a diversity of textiles, technique, pattern, inspiration, and provenance that characterizes quiltmaking's rich tradition. These remarkable objects were gathered and held in trust; they have now been passed to the museum for safekeeping, study, and special exhibition. The individual objects, brought together, enable us to consider more thoughtfully the whole of this fascinating legacy.

Textiles

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century woman whose loom could produce only plain, plaid, or checked fabric (perhaps enhanced by natural dyes of her own making) was understandably drawn to printed cloth with patterns of greater complexity. Whenever cost and circumstance permitted, she adorned home and self in the splendid printed fabrics that arrived at American ports or came to be manufactured beside the rivers of New England mill towns. The collection contains a substantial number of early printed and painted cottons such as those carefully cut and pieced to form a quilt top (cat. no. 4). Block, copperplate, and roller prints are all represented. Several glazed chintz *Pillar* prints are included, such as the alternating whole-cloth blocks in a *Full-Blown Tulip* (cat. no. 7) and two of the fabrics in a whole-cloth *Bars* (cat. no. 6). Even when the cloth is plain wool and the pattern the most simple of line, there is evident embellishment. In an eighteenth-century *One-Patch* variation (cat. no. 2) the pink wool is glazed and the green wool is watered.

Technique and Pattern

The technical applications available to the quiltmaker were varied and imaginative. Within the collection they range from the simple pieced technique of a *Four-Patch and Bars* (cat. no. 10) to the sophisticated detailing of the fringe that borders three sides of cat. no. 7. The typical elaboration and embellishment of the late nineteenth century is seen in the number of techniques used in a lap robe (cat. no. 15): a variety of silks have been pieced, knit, embroidered, and, finally, cut and stacked to form decorative borders. Of particular importance is a rare stenciled bedcover of homespun linen on

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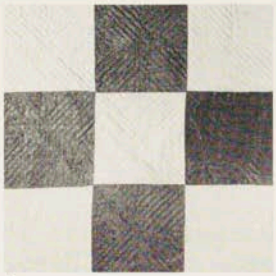
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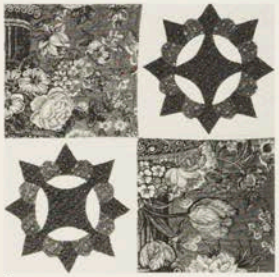
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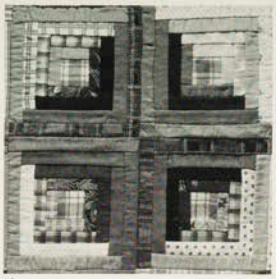

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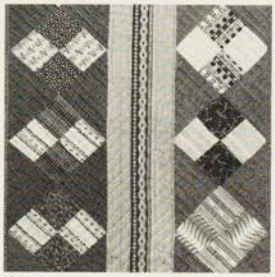

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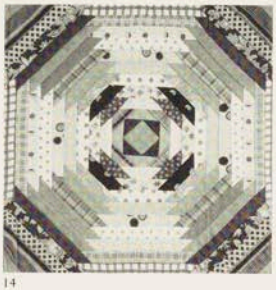

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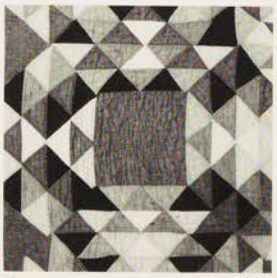

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which painted motifs of fruits and flowers have been formally applied (cat. no. 8). An *All-White* (cat. no. 1) is done in Marseilles quilting, unbatted except for those areas that are corded and stuffed.

The classic patterns such as *Variable Star* (cat. no. 3) are all represented in the collection, but individual and creative variations abound. Although the familiar echo of a traditional pattern most often remains, through the choice of color, cloth, border, and binding, the quiltmaker in each instance has made that pattern somehow uniquely her own.

Inspiration

The sources from which the quiltmaker drew her inspiration are often obvious, as with the *Flying Geese* pattern (cat. no. 9). Other images worked across the surface of these quilts were drawn simply from the natural forms the quiltmaker observed in her garden and in the forests or fields that stretched beyond it. It was these sources of color and line that led to the exuberant construction of a *Whirling Tulips* (cat. no. 12), and in celebration of herself the maker has hidden in her quilted stitches the inscription "Charlotte Wier . . . I Am Lady 1861." She also might have chosen to record on her quilt one of America's greatest adventures, the opening of the American West, with textile constructions based on the log cabin her husband erected deep in the wilderness (cat. nos. 13–14). Or she might have worked from designs on familiar or longed for luxuries found in the decorative arts of the growing nation; as a quiltmaker she came to share a vocabulary of motifs with those who worked in wood, silver, and glass.

Provenance

Although several pieces from England and France are included in the collection, the focus is on American quilts. A variety of origins are documented: an elegant *Sawtooth Star* variation with *Swag and Bow* border done in Woodstock, Virginia (cat. no. 11); an *Ocean Waves* worked in the midwestern United States with the typical religious restraint of an Amish quiltmaker (cat. no. 16); a quilt pieced in homespun linen and early discharge and roller prints and inscribed "HDB 1807" by the young daughter of a New Paltz, New York, family of Huguenots (cat. no. 5).

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All photographs are details.

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Checklist

All items are Gifts of The Betty Horton Collection.

1. ***Quilt, All-White***
France, second half 18th century
Linen; quilted, corded, and stuffed
95¼ x 77½ in.
(243.2 x 196.9 cm)
M.86.134.12

2. ***Quilt, One-Patch Variation***
United States (New England), c. 1780–1800
Multicolored, plain, glazed, and watered wool; pieced and quilted
103 x 88 in. (261.6 x 223.5 cm)
M.81.327.3

3. ***Quilt, Variable Star***
United States (New England), c. 1780–1800
Multicolored, plain and woven plaid wool; pieced and quilted
104½ x 102½ in.
(265.4 x 260.4 cm)
M.81.327.2

4. ***Quilt Top, Pinwheel and Broken Dishes*** (with central medallion motif)
England, 1807
Multicolored, printed and plain cotton; pieced and appliquéd; "MB 1807" inscribed in center of medallion in small cross-stitches worked in red thread
71½ x 62¼ in.
(181.6 x 158.1 cm)
M.86.134.1

5. ***Sampler Quilt*** (with multiple borders)
United States (New Paltz, New York), 1807
Attributed to Harriet Du Bois (1794–?)
Multicolored, printed and plain linen and cotton; pieced and quilted
93 x 84 in. (236.2 x 213.4 cm)
M.86.134.21

6. ***Quilt, Bars***
United States, c. 1830
Multicolored, printed cotton; pieced and quilted
104½ x 105 in.
(265.4 x 266.7 cm)
M.86.134.3

7. ***Quilt, Full-Blown Tulip***
(with inner *Sawtooth* border)
United States, c. 1830
Multicolored, printed and plain cotton; pieced, quilted, and embroidered; two-inch zigzag open work and fringe; "E x B" inscribed on reverse in small cross-stitches worked in red thread
94⅛ x 92⅛ in. (239.1 x 234 cm)
M.86.134.47

8. ***Stenciled Bedcover***
United States, c. 1830
Homespun linen with multicolored stenciled motifs
87¼ x 68 in. (222.9 x 172.7 cm)
M.86.134.35

9. ***Quilt, Flying Geese and Bars***
(with *Zigzag* border on three sides)
United States, c. 1845
Multicolored, printed and plain cotton; pieced and quilted
93¾ x 83½ in.
(238.1 x 212.1 cm)
M.86.134.38

10. ***Quilt, Four-Patch and Bars***
United States, c. 1850
Multicolored, printed cotton; pieced and quilted
85¼ x 82¾ in.
(216.5 x 210.2 cm)
M.86.134.33

11. ***Quilt, Sawtooth Star Variation***
(with *Swag and Bow* border)
United States (Woodstock, Virginia), c. 1850
Attributed to member of Carpenter family
Multicolored, plain and plaid cotton; pieced, appliquéd, and quilted
90½ x 90¼ in.
(229.9 x 229.2 cm)
M.86.134.26

12. ***Quilt, Whirling Tulips***
(with *Running Vine* border)
United States, 1861
Multicolored, plain cotton; appliquéd and quilted; quilted stitches form small hearts and the inscription "Charlotte Wier, St.(?) Co. I Am Lady 1861"
76½ x 76½ in.
(194.3 x 194.3 cm)
M.86.134.9

13. ***Quilt, Log Cabin, Barn Raising Variation***
United States (Pennsylvania), c. 1870–1880
Multicolored, printed, plaid, and plain wool and cotton; pressed
88 x 88 in. (223.5 x 223.5 cm)
M.86.134.19

14. ***Quilt, Log Cabin, Pineapple Variation***
United States (Pennsylvania), c. 1870–1880
Multicolored, printed, plaid, and plain wool and cotton; pressed
88 x 88 in. (223.5 x 223.5 cm)
M.86.134.18

15. ***Lap Robe, Mosaic and Bars***
United States, c. 1880–1890
Multicolored, silk; pieced, cut, knitted, and embroidered, with ribbon and multicolored embroidery floss
56¼ x 52 in. (144.1 x 132.1 cm)
M.86.134.5

16. ***Quilt, Ocean Waves***
Amish, United States (Ohio or Indiana), c. 1890–1910
Multicolored, plain cotton; pieced, quilted, and embroidered; commemorative inscription "Lovina Miller Jan 1843" embroidered in chain stitch on face; initials "E.T." appear elsewhere
84¼ x 65½ in.
(215.3 x 166.4 cm)
M.86.134.22

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