



Ottoman Embroidery

By Marianne Ellis, Jennifer Wearden

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This book is a celebration of the extensive collection of Ottoman embroidery at the V and A which ranges from the middle of the 16th century to 1900. In addition to illustrating over 100 major pieces, an introductory text puts the collection in context, explaining who the Ottomans were and their impact on Europe. The embroideries themselves include pieces such as sashes, kerchiefs and scarves which were made to satisfy the requirements of the Ottoman household and are strongly redolent of an exotic way of life. The embroideries can be divided into pre- and post-1720, when the Ottomans made peace with Central and Western Europe, and incorporated many aspects of Western art into their textile traditions. It was not until the 19th century however, that Ottoman embroidery in the form of towels and napkins began to appear in public and private collections in Britain. The book is illustrated with 145 embroideries which are split into the four most characteristic Ottoman techniques: surface darning, laid and couched, double running and double darning. Above all it is the unique double-sided embroideries that are fascinating to Western observers where the same basic stitch has been used over five centuries. This type of embroidery continues to be carried out today by a few skilled practitioners. All techniques are clearly explained through specially commissioned diagrams, which provide simple guidance and invaluable information for needle workers.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Beautiful embroidery is one of the unique contributions the Ottoman Empire made to world art. London's Victoria & Albert Museum has acquired over 680 pieces of this work. Here, Ellis (Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt), research assistant at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and Wearden (Samplers from the Victoria & Albert Museum and Persian Printed Cottons), assistant curator in textiles and dress at the Victoria & Albert Museum, pull selected pieces from that collection for this catalog. The Ottoman Empire is very briefly introduced in a chapter covering its history, expansion, culture, and influence, and tucked behind the plates is a wonderful chapter on the actual embroidery techniques, detailed in text and diagrams. The overall organization of the book is, unfortunately, clunky for example, there is no index, and the illustrations and their captions are separated. However, the color illustrations themselves are large and bright, showing the effect of the embroidery pattern or close-up details of the tiny stitches. An additional purchase for specialized collections. Karen Ellis, Nicholson Memorial Lib. Syst., Garland, TX

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About the Author

Marianne Ellis is a Research Associate at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and author of Samplers and Embroideries from Islamic Egypt (Ashmolean Museum, 2001). Jennifer Wearden is an Assistant Curator in the Textiles & Dress Department at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and co-author of Samplers (V&A Publications, 1999).

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