

BRIDAL FANTASIES

THE FASHION OF DREAMS
AN EXHIBIT



APRIL 2, 2007
TO
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LACIS MUSEUM of LACE and TEXTILES
2982 ADELIN STREET, BERKELEY, CA 94703

THE LACIS MUSEUM OF LACE AND TEXTILES

LMLT was established in October of 2004, as the legacy of Kaethe Kliot who was the spirit of the Lacis Textile Center and Retail Store, a haven for the textile community and all involved in virtually every aspect of the textile arts... a place where she provided support, encouragement and knowledge to all. This spirit remains, after her untimely passing in 2002, in the Museum which encompasses all that she loved.

This spirit is best exemplified by comments received from those she touched:

...whenever I needed to recharge my spirit, I knew that a visit to Lacis would do the trick...

...her sense of the appropriate, that just-rightness which made Laces the alluring treasure trove that draws us in...

...her enthusiasm was contagious and she always wanted to share it. She was the consummate teacher...

...she had a mission to share everything she knew...

...she did what she loved and her passion and enthusiasm was always evident...

...Kaethe was the sort of person one takes with them – part of who I am is because of her...

...She will be remembered for many things; for me it will be a sense that all is possible...

The core of LMLT is the lace and textile collection of Jules & Kaethe Kliot, representing 40 years of dedication to the preservation of the finest of human handiwork. The collection includes thousands of specimens from pre-Columbian Peru, the finest laces from the 17th c. European courts and examples of the machine laces exemplifying the 19th c. industrial revolution. An extensive library, focusing on lace, textiles and costume with over 10,000 items of books, patterns, articles and other ephemera, and a respectable collection of the related tools of the textile crafts is included in the resources of the Museum.

LMLT is dedicated

- to preserving the spirit of Lacis as created by Kaethe Kliot as a place of support, knowledge and encouragement for all involved in any aspect of the textile arts.
- to preserve lace and textiles of all cultures from all periods including the patterns and tools of creation, the objects of their purpose and the literature associated with these objects.
- to provide a resource center for research and documentation of these objects.

This current exhibit, curated by shop manager and bridal consultant Erin Algeo, takes a look back at the brides of eras past, celebrating the garments that represent romance come to fruition with all the accessories that complement this final happy sprint towards the dream that now becomes reality.

Jules Kliot, Director

From the mid nineteenth century through the nineteen sixties, the dresses and all the accessories that have brought the dreams of girlhood to life in satin, lace, pearls and tulle entwined with all the traditions, now symbolize the transition from girlhood to womanhood.



Inside almost every little girl there is a hidden designer. Ask her and she will describe to you in detail the dress she plans to wear on the day of her





wedding. Before she has even thought about the kind of person she wants to marry or how formal that commitment ceremony will be, she has planned

the dress she will wear. When the time comes, the shape, color and embellishments of that dress may have changed, shaped by the styles and her evolving tastes, but at heart, the personality of that dream will remain the same. She will still be the princess, empress or goddess she envisioned herself when she was a child.



The wedding day is the bride's day; all eyes are on her. She is at the apex of her beauty, allure, and desirability. This is the moment



when the dream becomes reality. From traditional blushing bride to glamour goddess, through her wedding, and more importantly her wedding ensemble, she



can reinvent herself for that special day. The swags of lace, hidden ribbons and beaded details of the



bride's ensemble line the pathway to the altar, under the huppah, or into her own special place.

The beautiful wedding dresses on display represent those brides lucky enough, through

the accidents of birth or careful planning, to create their own unique dress for this once-only special occasion. The selection of traditional and atypical headpieces, spectacular handmade



lace veils and mystical orange blossom garlands include pieces from bygone eras that are sometimes recognizable and sometimes curious. These





clothes are visions of the youth and beauty and dreams of the women who wore them. Full of elegance and grace, they are immortalized forever in tulle and pearls—poised on the threshold of diapers, mortgages, and all the new realities that life surely brings. Whether altered at home or in a designer’s workshop, the pieces in “Bridal Fan-



tasies” are a chance to witness the evolution of the dreams of our grandmothers and great grandmothers.

Although we picture a “traditional” wedding as one where the bride is dressed and veiled head to toe in white, the color and cut of bridal dress has changed greatly over the centuries. In ancient Rome, a bride was swathed in a flame-colored veil. Brides in subsequent periods wore their finest dress, in the style of the day and a color to suit their taste and means. This was the case well into the 19th century, when a bride generally wore the best dress





she owned, with her hair flowing loose for the last time and crowned with a garland of flowers. Her dress may have been made especially for the occasion, and was likely to be trimmed with orange blossoms (long associated in Mediterranean countries with fertility, and introduced to England and



America in the 1830's from France), but it would have been of a contemporary cut, to be retrimmed, altered according to fashion's changing dictates, and worn again. No matter how worn they were, such wedding dresses were often preserved and handed down from



mother to daughter, and in the process a record of bridal fashions over the last 150 years was also preserved, and can be seen in the current exhibit.

The 19th century witnessed a gradual but important change in bridal wear. No single event was more influential than the wedding of 18-year-old Queen



Victoria to her beloved Prince Albert in 1840. Rejecting the royal tradition of marrying in the heavy cloth-of-gold robes of state, the young queen



chose a gown of white satin with a collar and a 6 foot train of Honiton lace. In addition to her royal tiara she wore a garland of myrtle leaves



and orange blossoms, covered with a veil of Honiton lace (a gesture of support that revitalized the Devonshire lace-making tradition.) After the wedding ceremony she donned a bonnet trimmed with orange blossoms.



Even after Queen Victoria's wedding, brides continued to wear fine dresses cut according to current fashion in any color, but increasingly

they chose to follow Victoria's precedent of white, which was then the color of choice for formal occasions, especially for young women. Under the influence of the romantic poets the color took on new symbolism as a celebration of virginal purity and innocence.

Bridal dresses in the early years of the 20th century, though white, continued to follow fashion trends. During the 20's brides often shortened their gowns, and many of these dresses were covered with beads. The brides of the 30's chose elegantly simple evening dresses, cut on the bias from



the silky fabrics favored by Hollywood screen goddesses. During the 40's, wartime austerity placed restrictions on wedding festivities, and many a bride was married in a suit and hat, a wisp of veil making a nod to tradition. The war years also saw the introduction of a new tradition. Until then, it was usually only the bride who received a ring, but the young grooms, who were often married in uniform, wanted a tangible link to their bride to take with them to distant battlefields, and the "double ring" ceremony was born.

After the sobriety imposed by wars and economic depression, the bridal gown of the 1950's saw the revival of what had now become the traditional wedding.



The image of this wedding, and its fashions, had taken firm hold in girlhood fantasies: an evening gown of snowy white or

vintage ivory, with slender waist, a billowing skirt and a long train, lavished with lace and trimmed with pearls and crystals, ribbons and flowers, and a lace-edged veil anchored by a garland of flowers or, even better, a sparkling tiara. A touch of blue, especially in the garter that would be removed by a blushing groom and tossed to the tuxedoed men of the wedding party; long kid gloves,



an elaborate bouquet with trailing ribbons, a bridal purse with a lace hanky, and dainty satin slippers supplied the finishing touches.

In an important departure from earlier periods, the bridal gown was now designed



especially for the occasion, to be worn only once and then tucked away in tissue. The pragmatic demand for

a dress cut in the fashion of the day lost its hold, and brides are now free to





adopt the silhouettes of earlier eras, from a renaissance princess draped in brocade, to a demure Victorian maiden in layers of tulle, to a siren in slinky satin...to create the ensemble of her own childhood dreams as she faces the reality of woman-

