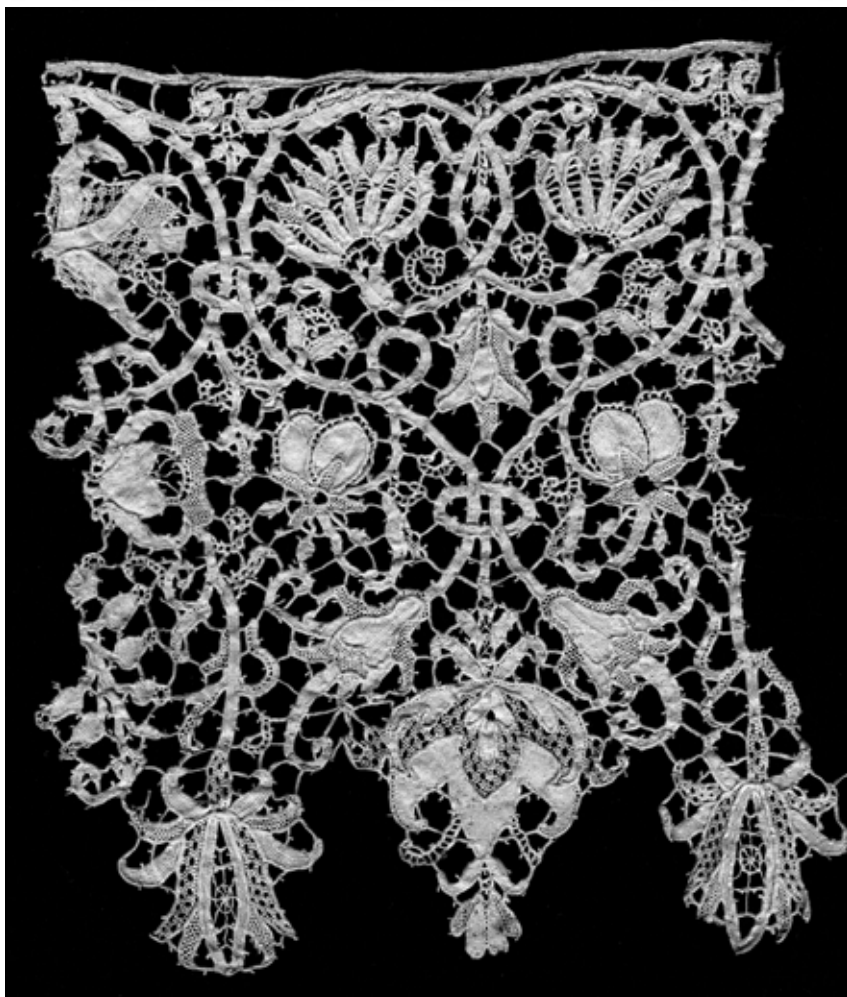


EARLY ITALIAN NEEDLEWORK



SEPTEMBER 28, 2013 TO
FEBRUARY 8, 2014

MON-SAT 12:00-6:00 PM
FREE ADMISSION



EXHIBIT CATALOG
LACISMUSEUM.ORG

LACIS MUSEUM of LACE and TEXTILES
2982 ADELINE 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 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 are 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 fascinating period in needlework represents a significant advancement in civilization in an age of enlightenment...the Renaissance. Man was now important and ornamentation and the decorative arts would blossom...and he reached unfathomed heights of perfection.

Jules Kliot, Director

EARLY ITALIAN NEEDLEWORK

The earliest decorative openwork needlework might be ascribed to the ornamentation of the ubiquitous fishing net in the fourteenth century. To a substantial part of the Mediterranean culture, the making of these nets was a common avocation. The small squares invited controlled designs as



these nets migrated into the home for use as curtains and decorative covers. *Lacis* is the name given to the early work, the technique remaining in vogue today, where it has evolved into a more popular crochet technique. The early



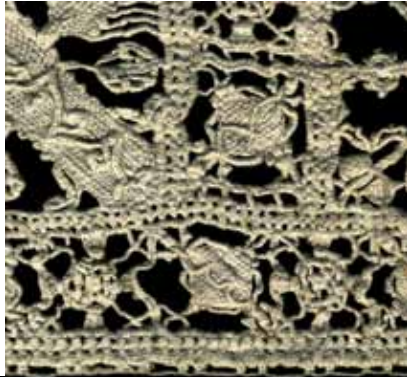
pattern books initially printed square grids representing the net, inviting the reader to create their own designs



which could then easily be transferred to the actual net. Later editions

presented and disseminated popular designs that could be universally fol-

lowed. Mythical beasts were a common theme as were bible scenes and characters from myths and folklore. Presented as charted grid patterns, much like the cross stitch patterns of today, the designs encouraged embroidery techniques where grids could be formed by the loom, the work known as *Buratto*, and by *Pull Work*, where the grid was formed by removing a regular pattern of



threads from a canvas and binding together the remaining threads.

This explosion of creative needlework and the ability to use it to tell stories was reinforced by a remarkable reawakening of civilization. Italy, the center of this Renaissance...the rebirth of the human spirit...extending this passion to the handwork of needle and thread.

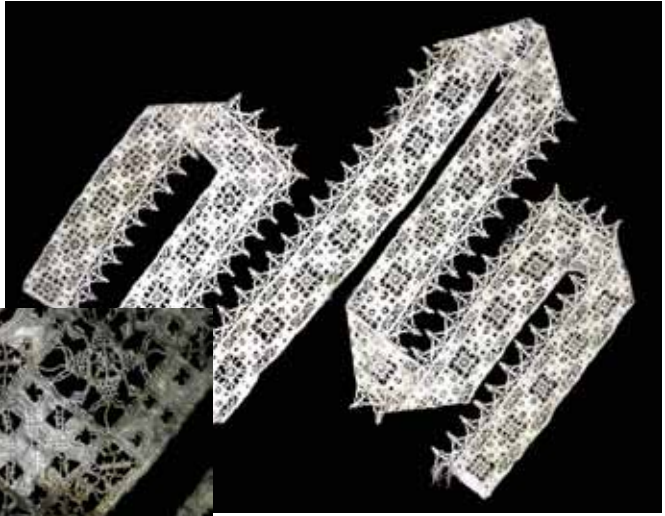


Fashion and dramatic changes in fashion demanded constant innovation, reflecting the competition among those of wealth and position. While expensive fabrics created the pallet for expression, even the richest



of fabrics demanded embellishment. Fullness through the techniques of smocking and gathering and embroidered trims became the center of attention, openwork embroidery evolving into an era of lace, free of any canvas, and the most extraordinary work of the human hand.

The wealthy Venetian woman when not occupied with dress and bleaching her hair, would often occupy her time with em-

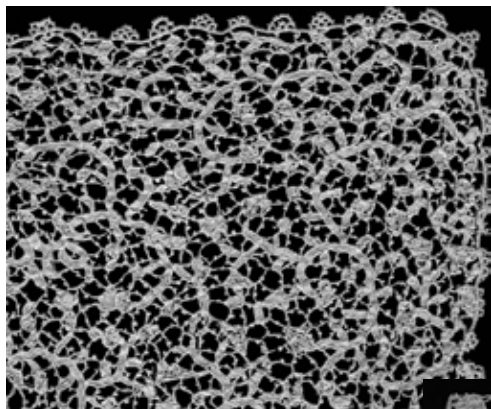


broidery, if for no other reason than to avoid boredom. As the mistress of the home developed her needlework skills, her servants followed creating trims on their own household linens, spreading these skills to their native villages.

It was the concept of creating holes in the fabric for use as decorations on household linens that would be the genesis of one of the greatest innovations in costume. The term lace, first men-



tioned in 1482, was to be the new term reflecting all forms of openwork in linen. *Punto tagliato* was the specific name given to this new embroidery where small square holes, organized by the counting of the woven threads, became the significant design element. The



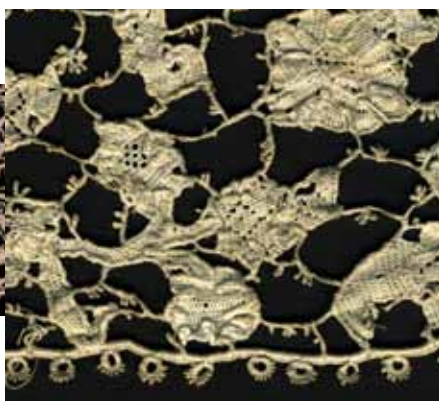
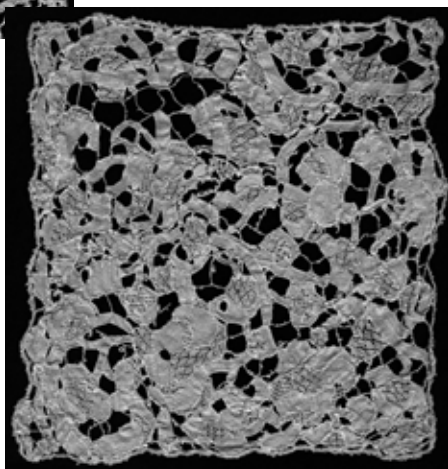
holes could be enlarged by reinforcing the opening with decorative stitches until eventually, the holes replaced most of the fabric, the few woven threads left serving only as the frame for decorative needlework. Called *Reticella*, it grabbed the attention of the artists and with the advent of the printing press, designs

for filling these holes could be printed and disseminated. The earliest of these pattern books date from 1543, and quickly spread throughout the continent.

It wasn't till needle and thread was freed from the base fabric that "lace" was born. The first appearance was in the extending points attached to the embroidered fabric. This new needlework, referred to as *Punto in Aria* or points-in-the-air, quickly became the rage, dominating fashion as well as being the focus of the 16th c. artists, who faithfully recorded, in minute detail, the glory of this gossamer fabric. Demand was insatiable as the great ruff or millstone collars as well as the large standing collars, supported by metal frames, served, as the vehicles for display in this age of extravagance.



This release of the needle from the canvas led to remarkable experimentation in openwork. The early *Coraline* lace, the name assigned as it resembled the the freedom of coral clearly demonstrated this experimentation. These random patterns were soon tamed into the solid



defined areas of *Point Plat de Venice* and then the dimensional buildup of the areas creating the very popular *Gros Pt de Venice* often compared to carved ivory. As styles in fashion evolved into a softer lace, the *Gros Pt* designs were miniaturized into *Rose Point* and then to the most remarkable Venetian lace, *Pt de Neige*. This amazing



development in both materials and skills took place from mid 15th c. peaking by the middle of the 17th c. The popularity and insatiable demands for lace, specifically by the French Courts, would cause its demise in Italy as France would develop its own lace industry, seeded by abducted Italian lace makers.

Major changes in fashion involved new softness in fabrics and style, the stiff ruffs giving way to falling collars and full cravats. and a new style of a reseau lace, characterized by

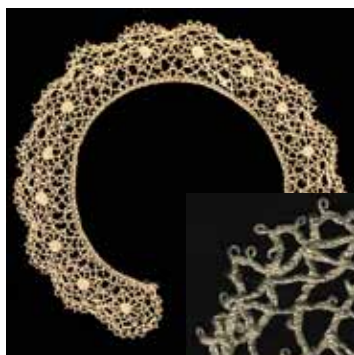




relatively flat design elements held together with a mesh ground.

Bobbin lace came from entirely different origins. The simple plaiting of the extended thread from the woven fabric was

obvious. This braid could be made independently and was a frequent element of passemen-



tarie. The plaiting process was the logical technique for incorporating the new gold and silver threads.

Requiring the use of many pins, bobbin lace designs were limited until 1500, when, through edicts of Henry VIII, the pin sudden-

ly became an item of commerce, where the specifics of its manufacturer were precisely spelled out. This supported the development of techniques for multiple braids to cross and interact, now the preferred skill for passementerie. Bobbin lace could now mimic





the popular designs of needle made *Reticella* and *Punto in Aria*. It was quicker, less costly and could accommodate the precious metallic threads. The pattern books, as early as 1557, now presented designs that could be worked in either technique.

The bobbin laces of Italy are not



singular in character, reflecting the provenance of their birth. Venice, steeped in the classics, refinement of civilization and wealth, was home to embroidery and the needle, cultivating the extraordinary skills that defined this period of opulence. Needlelace

was the natural focus for lace making. Fueled by the advent of printing, early patterns for embroidery and lace, originating in Venice and popularized by the artists of the time, quickly spread throughout Europe as well as Italy.

Le Pompe - A New Book

Giving Directions How to Make Small Braids of Ribbons of Gold,

Silk, Thread or Any Other Material, published in 1557,

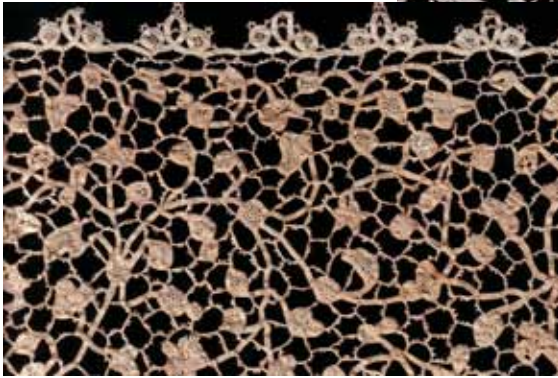
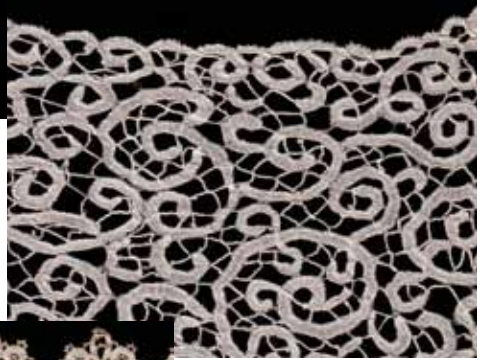




is recognized as the earliest pattern book devoted specifically to bobbin lace, many of the designs copied and later incorporated into other collections.

In the provincial areas of

Italy where lace seeded, bobbin lace flourished in a more practical form to accommodate this new decorative mode. While Venice still provided the inspira-



tion, it was in Milan, Genoa and Abruzzi which led the development of bobbin lace techniques. each area reflecting their unique traditions. Genoa looked to the designs of needle lace as something to emulate, designs of Reticella and

Punto in Aria now interpreted in bobbin lace, geometry and the incorporation of pointed leaf

shapes characteristic. Milan looked to the new softer, popular laces of Flanders as inspiration. A more gossamer and softer lace, the designs followed a trail of a wandering braid made with few bobbins, the braid joined to itself, with short bars as

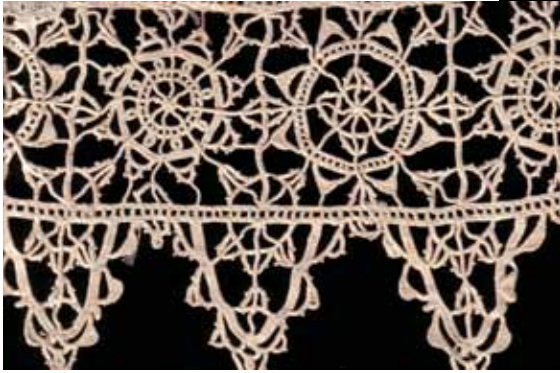


the work progressed. The bar joinings would evolve into an independent

net ground placed after the design elements were executed.

In Abruzzi, an isolated area in central Italy, the indigenous nature of their isolation created unique laces expressing the spirit of the lacemaker.

The laces of Abruzzi, specifically from the village of Pescocostanzo, are quite unique. An area distant from the renaissance, the style and purpose reflect the inherent peasant traditions of the area, the lace focused on the personal use of the makers and the local churches, ex-

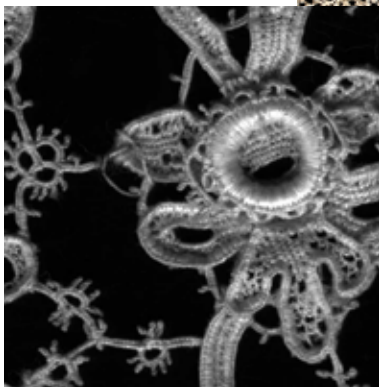


plaining the little recognition afforded to these laces. The laces are made from a coarser thread, without reference to any pattern but simply drawn with the

lacemaker's bobbins. A free lace given the name "*disegno sciolto*," the designs reflect interpretation of everyday familiar objects, abstracted by the passage of generations.



By the 18th c. the needle and bobbin laces of Belgian and Italy would



reign. The extraordinary cultivated linen threads of Belgian together with the unbridled wealth of the courts, supported

skills beyond imagination. A most curious lace, *Pt de Venise a Reseau*,



would suddenly appear. While it is assumed to be from Italy as a final effort to regain its recognition as an important commercial manufacturer of lace, its origins

remain in question. The finest of all laces, it is a soft gossamer needlelace of characteristic Baroque designs, its density documented as having 10,000 stitches in a square inch, the actual stitches only discernible through a microscope.

