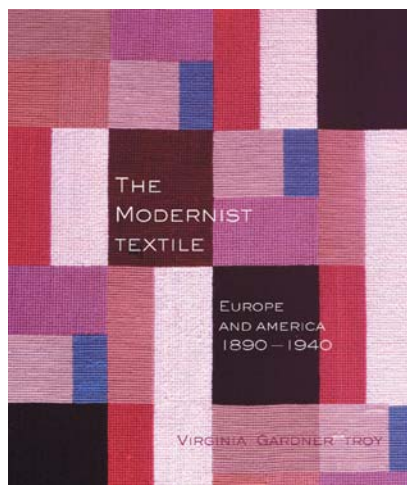


The Modernist Textile: Europe and America, 1890-1940 / Virginia Gardner Troy.—Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, November, 2006.—192 p.: ill.—ISBN 0-85331-900-6: \$60.00.



The Modernist Textile is a beautifully illustrated exploration of European and American textiles between 1890 and 1940. Author Troy observes that textile arts are often dismissed as too female, decorative or “minor” to merit inclusion in art history surveys or to warrant the critical attention afforded the “fine” arts. She maintains, however, that textiles were central in modernism’s theoretical debates largely due to the influence of Richard Wagner’s conception of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which artistic collaboration placed textiles on the same level with other arts, unified toward a common goal.

Troy, Associate Professor of Art History at Berry College in Georgia, is also author of *Anni Albers and Ancient American Textiles: from Bauhaus to Black Mountain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002). The acknowledgements and illustration credits in *The Modernist Textile* document her extensive research and its bibliography, endnotes, and indexing add to its scholarly weight. The introduction is followed by five chapters: “The New Art: 1890-1905,” “Primitivism, Abstraction and Experimentation 1905-1920,” “Surface-Designed and

Embellished Textiles from the 1920s,” “Constructed Textiles 1920-1940” and “Nationalism, Surrealism and Pictorialism in the 1930s.”

This is, by necessity, a selective survey. With some exceptions carpets, furnishing fabrics, fashion and interior design are excluded. Troy’s approach is to analyze exemplar avant-garde textiles amid their social and artistic contexts, singling out both the well-known and the less familiar. Artists like Anni Albers and Sonia Delaunay are presented, as are lesser-known artists like depression-era quilter Fannie B. Shaw. Non-western inspiration and artistic exchanges within countries and continents and between Europe and America are also reviewed. Troy also includes work by artists better known for other media, such as Man Ray’s pieced wool bedcover, and a line of textiles designed by photographer Edward Steichen. I found myself repeatedly surprised and delighted by Troy’s refreshing “textile-centric” method.

Researchers will also want to consult more in-depth studies, which range from Wendy Kaplan’s *Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America* (New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 2004) to Ann Dumas’ *Matisse Textiles* (New York, NY: Abrams, 2005). Still, this unique and readable survey should facilitate a deeper understanding of textile arts’ worth among students with little specialized background, while offering new insights to more advanced readers. It is highly recommended for public, academic and special libraries serving clientele with interests in art history, modernism and textile design.

Nina K. Stephenson, Art & Photography Librarian, Fine Arts Library, University of New Mexico, nstephen@unm.edu

Copyright © 2007 ARLIS/NA

