

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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TEXTILES AND ORNAMENTS OF INDIA, edited by Monroe Wheeler with text by Pupul Jayakar and John Irwin. 96 pages, 94 plates, 16 in color. Published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed by Simon and Schuster. Price: \$4.00.

TEXTILES AND ORNAMENTS OF INDIA, a profusely illustrated book edited by Monroe Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications at the Museum of Modern Art, will be published by the Museum on June 1st.

This publication--a picture book with interpretive essays by Pupul Jayakar and John Irwin--is based on the exhibition held at the Museum in the spring and summer of 1955. On the day of the opening, April 13, 1955, Harriet Morrison of the New York Herald Tribune described the exhibition:

"Saris, Kashmir shawls and temple hangings in stinging pinks and purples, murky greens and sun yellows line walls and windows, while a wealth of jewelry sparkles on silk. The whole show is a rich profusion of color and pattern."

Besides photographs of the installation, which took the form of an imaginary bazaar designed by the well-known architect Alexander Girard, the book contains many plates, sixteen in brilliant color, of the textiles and ornaments exhibited. There are details from block print and tie-dyed coarse cotton saris, delicate printed silk and embroidered tissue saris, and hand-painted temple hangings as well as many other woven and embroidered shawls and coverlets. There are also illustrations of selected pieces of precious jewelry set with rubies, emeralds, pearls, and diamonds in settings which vary from hammered gold to minute gold and silver filigree together with rare 16th and 17th century enamels and vessels of carved and inlaid jade. The book serves to bring before the American public the endless wealth and variety of Indian craftsmanship which is undergoing a re-evaluation and renaissance since India gained her independence.

The exhibition, of which the book is a record, was conceived by Monroe Wheeler during a visit to India two years ago. The material was selected by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. who was formerly on the Museum staff. Rare historic fabrics and ornaments from Museums and private collections in India, England, and this country were included as well as contemporary textiles and jewelry from the bazaars of India

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today. The exhibition was organized under the Museum's International Exhibitions Program and is presently being circulated to other important American museums.

A poem by Pupul Jayakar entitled "The Seasons" recounts the significance of dress in the life of an Indian maiden. Mrs. Jayakar, Special Deputy of the All-India Handicrafts Board who came to New York to act as consultant for the exhibition, is an expert on Indian textile design. Her essay, which follows the poem, deals with "Indian Fabrics in Indian Life." In her own words:

"To discover the sources of their inspiration and to comprehend the inherent significance of the vast field of Indian fabrics, they should be seen in context, against the social and historical background from which they have emerged and on the dark-toned bodies of the people for whom they were made. For in India, textiles have rarely been concerned with fashion or individual separateness and uniqueness; rather, garments have always been only one part of a complex ritual of life, one aspect of a preordained milieu in which man is born, grows to stature, and dies."

She gives a lucid account of the symbolism of color in India, the importance of geographical and ethnic backgrounds to design, and the various means through which a great craft tradition expresses itself.

A second essay by John Irwin, "Textiles in Historical Perspective," deals with the historic aspects of Indian craftsmanship. He discusses the traditional methods of textile dyeing and the different classifications of materials which varied from articles of luxury made under court patronage to simple folk-embroidery. Mr. Irwin is the Assistant Keeper of the Oriental Collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London from which several hundred objects were borrowed for the exhibition. He contributed the selected bibliography to this book.

Besides editing "Textiles and Ornaments of India," Monroe Wheeler has written the introduction for "The Miserere of Georges Rouault," is co-author with John Rewald of "Modern Drawing" and author of "Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators."

Review copies and black and white photographs are available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, N. Y. Circle 5-8900, Ext. 203.