

PAINTED AND DYED COTTON PANEL

Indian (Coromandel Coast) for the European Market, third quarter of the 18th century

By the late seventeenth century, mordant- and resist-dyed cottons from India's western coast had taken Europe by storm, introducing an entirely new color palette and design sensibility for both dress and furnishing textiles. Their vibrant hues, fantastical floral motifs, and—above all—their colorfastness, made Indian calicoes or chintzes highly covetable. The enthusiasm for these fabrics, imported by the East India Companies, so alarmed manufacturers of established European textiles that bans against their importation were enacted lasting for much of the eighteenth century, except in the Netherlands. However, loopholes like Marseille's status as a free port and the illicit "re-landing" of chintzes imported only for export to the colonies, allowed French and English consumers to incorporate these textiles into their wardrobes.

With its profusion of exotic floral forms spread rhythmically across a bright white ground, this panel was created to appeal to the European market. It was likely once part of the skirt of a woman's dress, which has allowed for the preservation of a full selvedge width. The ambitiously scaled 26 ½ in. vertical repeat incorporates serpentine cornucopia-like motifs with stripes and patterned fillings. The design is based on the compositional schemes of European bizarre silks of almost three generations before, in particular, the interlocking spiral forms. Intensely colored flowers in shades of blue, red, purple, and pink, with some hints of yellow, present a mélange of recognizable European species such as roses and tulips, freely interpreted by the eyes of Indian artisans, with more fanciful blossoms in the vein of earlier Indian palampores. These various flowers sprout from the same vine or even from other flower heads with a whimsy and sense of freshness that Europeans tried hard to perfect in their own printed imitations.

Copies of Indian chintzes began to appear almost as soon as the originals gained popularity in the late seventeenth century. Western craftsmen never mastered the intricate dyeing process handed down from father to son in small workshops in India, though this did not stop them from attempting to duplicate Indian models using the only method available to Europeans at the time, block printing. At the manufactory founded in 1760 at Jouy-en-Josas, Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf (1738-1815) refined the art of woodblock printing in imitation of Indian cottons using his personal collection of authentic Indian specimens. The most sophisticated woodblock prints of this type were the so-called *perses* or *indiennes*. As Oberkampf later noted, "*Perses*, which I began by imitating and went on to copy, made my reputation, even in foreign countries." These textiles, which required many blocks and were of very large scale, were made in limited quantities and aimed at the nearby courtly market, including customers such as the duchesse de Choiseul and Marie Antoinette. Oberkampf himself also used Indian-style printed cottons to decorate his own home.

This panel was copied directly by Oberkampf's team of designers at Jouy. Two original gouache designs from the manufactory are preserved in the archives of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, replicating motifs from this Indian panel almost exactly (scrapbook vol. AA241, pp. 1-2, both pages marked #5153). Paper impressions of the woodblock prints exist at the Musée de la Toile de Jouy, along with paper impressions of two coordinating border designs. In addition, two printed cotton fragments of the wider border are preserved at the Royal Ontario Museum (934.4.174) and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (BAD FF 14.12).

While scholars have known that Oberkampf's designers had Indian prototypes in hand to copy at the factory, very few of the original chintzes have been identified; two examples are in the Royal Ontario Museum, and another is in the Victoria & Albert Museum (see John Irwin and Katherine B. Brett, *The Origins of Chintz*, 1970, p. 124, pl. 144 & fig. 57; and p. 124-25, pl. 146a-b & fig. 26; and Josette Brédif, *Printed French Fabrics: Toiles de Jouy*, 1989, p. 12 and p. 113). A caraco made of an Indian chintz nearly identical to the present example is in an American private collection. The discovery of this panel sheds light on the legacy of cyclical and reciprocal design influences between Indian cottons and western textiles throughout the eighteenth century.

68" L x 46" W

