



Encyclopedia of
Furnishing Textiles,
Floorcoverings and
Home Furnishing
Practices

1200–1950

Clive Edwards

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Textiles, Floorcoverings and
Home Furnishing Practices,
1200–1950

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Guide to Use

The encyclopedia is planned with alphabetical entries A–Z. The topic titles are generally based on modern spelling. Generic topics, such as carpets, usually have a brief overview, then the reader is referred to detailed entries relating to specific or particular types. Some generic headings, such as protective furnishings, include case covers and loose covers as there are substantial overlaps that are easier to understand together. These individual entries direct the reader to the particular location. Many entries are cross-referenced in relation to their construction and/or fibre content. They are also referenced to associated topics. For example, curtain pole is also referenced to cornice pole, French rod and railway. Words that appear in bold in the text indicate their own individual entry. There are two bibliographical referencing systems: items cited in the entries are listed in the bibliography at the end of the encyclopedia. At the end of many entries, readers are referred to specialist reading and reference material as appropriate.

Introduction

The main aim of this book is to provide a comprehensive reference work of products and their uses in the area of furnishing textiles, interior furnishings and floorcoverings used in domestic interiors. The emphasis is on British and American domestic textiles and furnishings, and the consumption of them over the period 1200–1950, although references are made to European and other cultural influences, especially to India and the Far East.

The approach is based on the author's *Encyclopaedia of Furniture Materials, Trades and Techniques* (Ashgate, 2001) and therefore includes primary and secondary source material, patent information, contemporary descriptions of use, technical information, etc. It is intended to be of value to a wide range of readers including the casual visitor as well as the researcher.

Each entry gives a definition of the term, the etymology of the name and its origins, as appropriate. In the case of textiles, fibres and construction methods are noted. Most entries have examples of use taken from contemporary sources. The progress of a cloth through time and the change in yarns used are noted when possible.

The variable nature of spelling before the seventeenth century has meant that I have assumed responsibility for adjusting some of the variations that occur in early texts, as this ensures some degree of clarity, and thereby assists comprehension. In cases where the meaning is clear, I have left the original text.

It is important to point out what has been omitted. Any encyclopedia has to be selective to some degree. Technical construction details, descriptions and discussions of designs and designers are areas that are already well served. Particular specialist fields, such as Oriental carpets and rugs, lace, embroidery and needlework, are also generally beyond the scope of this work, although mention is made of some aspects of their use. As the book is a history rather than a guide to identification, the reader is referred to the many fully illustrated works that show images of textiles and their usage.

Finally, acknowledgement is made to the many scholars who have prepared the ground for this work through their own researches. Although the bibliography points to the works used, I should like to draw particular attention to earlier historians such as Percy Macquoid and Robert Symonds. More recently, the researches of Geoffrey Beard, Lesley Boynton, Christopher Gilbert, Peter Thornton and Annabel Westman have been invaluable to me, particularly in relation to historic upholstery and textile use. In terms of textiles themselves, the work of Pamela Clabburn, Donald King, Santina Levey, Florence Montgomery and Mary Schoeser has also been extremely helpful.

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A – Z entries

Abaca

A fibre derived from the abaca plant (Manila hemp) that has been used for textiles, hats and matting, probably from the early eighteenth century. According to Caulfeild & Saward (1887), the fibre was introduced into France for dress, **tapestry** and **upholstery** work, and in India it was made into 'muslins and linen cloth' (p.1). In the 1950s, it was used as a **weft** in some upholstery fabrics (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950). See also **Hemp**, **Matting**, **Muslin**.

Abbot's cloth

Cotton, **linen** or **union** basket weave cloth used for hangings and **curtains**. Also known as **Monk's cloth** (USA).

See also **Weave: Basket**.

Abnakee rug

An American **hooked rug** made on a **jute**, **burlap/hessian** background. Twilled **wool flannel** is dyed and cut into strips and then hooked into the base. Bold designs are a feature of these rugs, which were popular in the early twentieth century. Many of the designs were developed from Native American imagery. A variation was discussed by Mabel Priestman who explained that 'the Abnakee rugs are made of all-wool unbleached flannel twill, which is afterwards dyed [to] the desired shade. These are among the most beautiful and durable of the rugs, their weight and beauty of colour making them a valued possession which will last a lifetime' (1910, p.161).

See also **Rag rug**.

FURTHER READING

Albee, H.R. (1901). *Abnakee Rugs*, Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press.

Accordion pleat

An upholsterers' term for a **pleat** made by the application of heat and pressure to create an overlapping series. The knife-edge effects are used only in lightweight materials.

Accordion shade

Window **blinds** generally made of cloth that pulls up in narrow, sharply **pleated** folds. They hang flat when extended.

See also **Roman blind**.

Acetate

See **Art silk**, **Rayon**.

Acorn

A small wood or metal fitting fixed to the end of a **cord** to make the operation of a **blind** or similar contrivance easier. They are made in a similar shape and size to the oak tree acorn, hence the term.

Acrylic

A synthetic fibre made from acrylonitrile, which is derived from coal, petroleum and other materials. It is used in the manufacture of furnishing fabrics, **blankets** and **carpets**. It is warm, strong and crease resistant and is a popular **wool** substitute. It has relatively low abrasion resistance. Modacrylic (modified acrylic) is an **upholstery** yarn that is sometimes blended with other fibres. These yarns have been commercially available since the 1940s.

See also **Back-coated fabric**, **Foam-backed curtain**, **Pillow**, **Velvet**.

Adelaide mat

'This mat is made of a coarse twisted fringe of worsted threads, which is closely sewn upon a padded hempen back. This mat is always coloured and usually bordered, two colours being generally used in each mat.' (Brown & Gates, 1872, p.184.)

Adhesive

There are a number of applications for adhesives in the preparation of **drape** and **upholstery**. Firstly, they may be employed as a dressing on materials to dustproof or to stiffen them. Secondly, they are used to fix one material to a substrate, such as a fabric to a **cornice**, or a **skiver** to a desktop. Thirdly, they can act as a finish to a cut raw edge of a fabric (to stop the weave unravelling), or to set **embroidery** to prevent distortion caused by **stitch** tension, or to bond carpet **pile**. Fourthly, they might be used to fix one upholstery structure layer to another, such as **cushion foams**, or to attach **trimmings** and **passementerie**.

There are three main types of adhesive based on their origins. Firstly there are the proteins (animal glues) including gelatine, skin glue (rabbit, scotch), fish glues (isinglass) and casein. Secondly, the vegetable-based glues including polysaccharide gums, e.g. gum arabic or acacia gum, and vegetable mucilage such as starch. Thirdly, there are the newer synthetic glues including cellulose derivatives, hot melt polyamides and rubber cements.

These materials may be applied by brush, gun or spray and are often produced for specific roles.

See also **Bonded fabric**.

Afghan

See **Sofa rug**.

Agra cloth

A cloth that is as coarse as **burlap/hessian** (Hunter, 1918).

Aigrette

The feathers of birds, especially egret, osprey or ostrich, made into a tuft or plume shape to decorate the corners of four-poster beds. They spring out of the cups fitted on each corner of the bed. Aigrettes were most

popular in the seventeenth century.
See also **Bed furniture**, **Cup**, **Feather**.

Aiguillette

A pointed metal tag which is used to finish off a **cord**. The origin of the term reflects the French word for 'needle'. They are used extensively in military uniform work and therefore made a connection between decorative **needlework** and **passementerie**. In furnishing applications, they were used often in conjunction with other **trimmings** and decorative features.

Albatross

A lightweight, plain or **crêpe** weave textile usually of **wool** or blends with a napped surface. It was often used in the twentieth century for underwear and children's garments. It was also employed for **curtain-ing**: 'Albatross with taffeta bindings in various colors is an inexpensive and rather new winter hanging. Use a green albatross edged with black, a rose edged with a deeper tone, or a cream edged with blue, always taking care to bring out the warmest colors in the room.' (Foster, 1917, p.191.)

Allapeen (aka Alapeen)

A mixed cloth woven from **wool** and **silk**, or a **mohair** and **cotton** blend that was apparently similar to **poplin**. It was chiefly used for men's clothing but was also sold by upholsterers. References are found from the 1730s but appear to die out by the latter part of the century. In 1751, Thomas Baxter, an upholster (upholsterer) of Boston, Mass., held in his shop the following: '88yds of allepeen totalling £63.10.0' (Cumplings, 1964, p.15).

Alentours

A **border** for tapestries differing from standard borders that often simulated picture frames. The alentours, first developed at the **Gobelins tapestry** factory c.1714, simulated a decorated panel with *trompe-l'œil* figures and flowers. The alentours filled a large part of the work so that the central motif representing a framed picture was shown off against the alentours frame. The benefit of the process was to reduce the complexity of the design, allowing less experienced workers to produce this part and also enabling customers to specify sizes.

See also **Gobelins tapestry**, **Tapestry**.

Algerian (aka Algerienne)

A **woollen** fabric that originally came from Algiers. In the later nineteenth century the name referred to a striped **cotton** (or cotton and **silk**) cloth used for covering sofas, hangings and **curtains**.

Algerian appears to have been introduced into Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, when it received significant acclaim from design critics. Charles Eastlake commented that it was 'made chiefly of cotton and was also designed with horizontal stripes of colour on an unbleached white ground ... and had the additional advantage of being washable' (1878, p.99).

Around the same time, the American critic, Clarence Cook, extolled its virtues: 'The stuffs called Algeriennes, made of silk and cotton, in gay but well-harmonized stripes are serviceable, and look well to the last' (1878, p.67). In the same year, the amateur decorator and author, Lady Barker, commented on the use of 'Algerine': 'the other [bed], of modern carved oak, had been copied from the pattern of an old settle. It was low and wide, with only one deep well-stuffed mattress, round which an Algerine striped blue and white cotton cloth had been

wrapped.' (1878, p.43.) By 1887, its use seems to have gone beyond interiors. Caulfeild & Saward described it as having:

Alternate stripes of rough knotted cotton web and one of a delicate gauze-like character, composed of silk. It is employed for the making of women's burnouses, in imitation of those worn by the Arabs. It used to be produced in scarlet and creamy-white, as well as in the latter only. (1887, p.4.)

Although used for dressmaking, it remained a favourite for furnishers of the period. The French historian Henri Havard (1887) explained that 'Algerienne' was particularly suitable for **portières**, curtains and **wall coverings**, as well as for covering sofas and divans. In the USA, it was specifically used for **awnings** and curtains. By 1950, it was defined as a French coating fabric made of alternate stripes (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950).

See also **Timbuctoo**.

Algerian fibre

The shredded leaves of the North African palm grass *Chamareops humilis*, which are made to curl in a process similar to that used on animal **hair**. It is sometimes dyed black. The fibre was used in **upholstery** work as a first filling because it has good resilient properties over a long period. It was certainly known in the later nineteenth century and was used for upholstery work well into the twentieth century.

Alhambra quilt

A **jacquard** figured fabric with a plain ground **weft** and two **warps**. The cloth is woven by a combination of jacquard for the figure and healds



1. Alhambra quilt detail
(E. Ostick, *The Draper's*
Encyclopaedia, 1955)

for the plain foundation, with a warp for each. The figuring warp is usually two-ply and coloured, while the ground warp is single and undyed. The figuring warps float on the back of the cloth when not required for the design. The figuring is often very large with only one repeat to a **quilt**. The Army & Navy Stores in London sold both blue-and-white and red-and-white Alhambra quilts from their 1907 catalogue.

Alhambra was also a generic name for low-priced bed quilts, which were heavy enough to provide some warmth. Many were woven with **borders** and a centred ornamental design (French, 1937, p.135). In 1950, the Alhambra was described as 'the cheapest quilt made and very popular' (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950). In 1955, it was noted that the Alhambra quilts had recently reappeared. It was explained that Alhambra bedcovers were an example of the extra warp method of textile decoration (Ostick, 1955, pp 319 and 355).

See also **Bedspread**.

Alligator cloth

In 1950 this was described as 'a trade name for a coarse plain-weave cotton fabric coated with a varnish finish to imitate alligator skin that was used for upholstery'. (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950.)

Alpaca

A woven fabric using yarns spun from the very fine **wool** of the alpaca, a Peruvian sheep species. It was first introduced in the 1830s and used occasionally on side chairs in the nineteenth century. The yarns were also used in **Utrecht velvet** production in the nineteenth century. In the mid-twentieth century, the yarns were sometimes combined with **cotton** and then roller-printed with small patterns for use as **casement curtains**.

Aluminium coated lining

A **curtain lining** material where the inside-face is coated with aluminium particles to exclude heat, light or cold. The visible side is usually cream-coloured, woven **cotton sateen**. It was introduced in the later twentieth century.

See also **Insulated lining**.

Alva marina (aka Ulva marina, Zostera)

A name for dried **seaweed** that was prepared and used as a coarse **upholstery** and bedding **stuffing**. It had very poor resistance and durability. Nevertheless, it was used for a range of upholstery tasks. Early in the nineteenth century, the Birmingham furnishing draper, Thomas Harris, advertised the sale of Alva marina amongst many other upholstery requisites (John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library Oxford University). In 1844, Webster & Parkes talked of the upholstery use of seaweed as follows: 'Well spoken of as a stuffing for mattresses; does not harbour vermin ... is tolerably light and soft... If not sufficiently washed is said to attract moisture, owing to a little salt remaining in it' (p.297).

The 1853 bedding catalogue of the London firm, Heal, lists the following mattress types based on fillings: 'palliasse / Alva marina / bordered flock / coloured wool/white wool/ upper white wool (to use over feather beds) / Best French / Horse hair / spring mattresses' (Heal, 1972). This seems to show the lowly place Alva marina held in the pecking order. In 1866, Alva marina was defined as a pseudo-fibre in the *Treasury of Botany* and was described as follows:

The common sea wrack has leaves varying from one to several feet in length, and rarely more than a quarter of an inch broad. These are

commonly used for packing, and by upholsterers for stuffing mattresses and cushions, being sold for that purpose under the names of Ulva marina or Alva marina. (Lindley, 1866.)

It was later pointed out that 'alva marina has been objected to for stuffing mattresses as likely to absorb damp; the saline properties would, nevertheless, prevent its giving cold. Other weeds and mosses, the products of Italy and America, are used for the same purpose, and are cheaper than horse-hair and wool' (Bitmead, 1912, p.17). It was generally out of use by the early twentieth century.

See also **Grass: Sea wrack grass, Mattress, Moss**.

Amamee

Indian (Bengal) plain-weave **cotton** cloth used for clothing and furnishings. In 1924, it was defined as 'smooth, closely woven cotton cloth from Bengal. The coarser grades were called Tissuti and the finer ones Bissuti. Used for shirts, bedcovers, curtains and also for printing' (Harmuth, 1924, p.6).

Amens

A figured **worsted** cloth with a double or treble **warp**, often **brocaded** or figured. The name probably derived from Amiens where it was first made. It was occasionally used in the later eighteenth century for **upholstery**.

American cloth

See **Oilcloth**.

American Oriental

An American trade name for machine woven **carpets** and **rugs** that have been processed to imitate washed Oriental rugs.

There are rugs made with an artificial sheen or lustre in imitation of genuine oriental [rugs]. They may be of Wilton, Axminster or velvet weaves. Some have the regular appearance of power-loom rugs on the back; others show the pattern clear through as do the genuine orientals. These rugs are the so-called 'American orientals'. They vary widely in their quality the finest being very beautiful and durable, with all the outward appearance of colour lustre and design of the genuine. The poorest being distinctly inferior... The most common method [of creating an artificial sheen] is the employment of the same chemical wash method used on true, modern orientals. (Bennett, 1937, p.111.)

American tapestry

A process of **tapestry** making, using a **silk warp** and needle-worked **embroidery** silks rather than a shuttle. This process was developed by Candace Wheeler in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and sold through the Associated Artists' atelier. They were sold as 'American tapestries made by embroidery alone' (Burke, 1986, p.98–102).

Anabasse

An eighteenth-century Lancashire **blanket** material that imitated a blue-and-white striped loincloth material from India. By the twentieth century, *The Mercury Dictionary* defined it as a striped blanket material that was made in France for use in her colonies (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950).

Animal skin

Skins including furs, complete with **hair** or **wool**, are untanned hides

2. *Antimacassar design* (S. Caulfeild & B. Seward, *The Dictionary of Needlework*, 1887)

that are cleaned and dressed. The subcutaneous side is very thoroughly scraped and dried. After drying, the skin is manipulated to soften the handling. Sometimes the skins are oil or alum dressed on the flesh side to improve their qualities, and they are often lined.

For centuries animal skins have been used in furnishings, often for bedding and for floorcovers. Writing in the twelfth century, Alexander Neckam discussed the making of a bed: '...next, a coverlet of green cloth or of coarse wool, of which the fur lining is badger, cat, beaver or sable, should be put' (Holmes, 1952, pp 82–3). The 1386 inventory of Arnold Montenev listed: '1 covering of pure miniver [white fur] of 26 timbers [40 skins is 1 timber] and 38 skins, and 1 fur of martens of 60 skins and 1 fur of squirrel of 5 timbers and 15 skins and 1 covering of conies' (Steer, 1958, p.155).

Although used on the floors during the Middle Ages, they seem to have gone out of use by the seventeenth century, certainly in fashionable homes. One example that seems exceptional is 'one baire skin with the haire on' in the Great Closet of Kensington Palace in 1697 (Thornton, 1978, p.148).

By the nineteenth century, they appear to have been revived as interior furnishings. The use of small skins as floor **rugs** grew. In 1813, the Duke of Buccleuch's London house sported '2 white Sheep Skin door rugs' and 'a brown sheepskin rug for stairs' (Ellwood, 1995, p.197). In 1827, John Wilson, a cabinet-maker and upholsterer from Liverpool, offered for sale 'brown Lapland rugs, white sheepskin rugs' (DEFM, 1986, p.98). A little later, J.C. Loudon discussed the use of skins as mats:

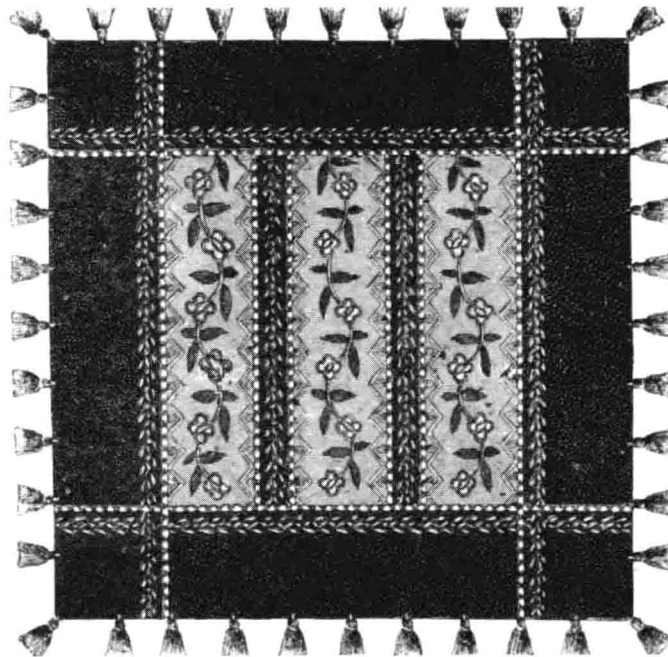
One of the best for a cottager's bedroom door is a black or grey sheepskin with all the wool on. A black or dark goatskin makes also a very handsome mat. Skins with white or other coloured hair or wool make very handsome mats but are hardly advisable for a cottage, as they require washing. (1839, p.347.)

Accent rugs made from natural shaped or formed animal skins were a feature of the later nineteenth-century interior, especially in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1884, the London retailers, Maple and Co, recommended sheepskins, goatskins and the skins of the wolf and the bear for use in the interior. They went on to say that 'a favourite arrangement of the bearskin is a black centre with a brown surround, or vice versa; or the complete skin of a "grizzly" mounted on black' (Maple and Co, 1884, p.36). The American authors, Williams & Jones, in their work, *Beautiful Homes*, suggested a range of animal skins including sheep or lamb as well as game animals, but also listed common skins, 'such as rabbit, squirrel, opossum, raccoon and even the domestic cat' (1878, p.306). They commented that, 'many may smile to see that pussy may be made into a thing of use and beauty but if the furrier will use her skin for muffs and tippets, surely we may for rugs etc' (1878, p.306). This type of practice was apparently also fashionable in England. Ward & Lock's *Home Book* (1880) recalled the use of 'the skin of a favourite brown setter of Irish breed [which] lay before the washstand in perfect harmony'. The skins of more exotic animals, such as leopards and tigers, were also featured in later nineteenth-century interiors, often being examples of trophies from hunting.

In the twentieth century, various sheepskins and goatskins have been popular as floor and bed rugs. Other animal skins (apart from those converted to leather) have also been used for **upholstery**, including zebra, pony and cow skins, which have all been used as seat coverings. See also **Leather**.

Antimacassar (aka 'Tidy' or Chair back)

A device to protect the upper back portions of upholstered chairs.



Although strictly referring to the nineteenth century, these **protective furnishings** had their origins in the eighteenth century. During that period, **silk** flaps intended to match the main covering were fitted to **upholstery** to protect it from wig powder.

In the nineteenth century, antimacassars were a decorative flap of textile that did not match the upholstery but were designed to protect the fixed upholstery covers of furnishings from spoiling from the effects of macassar oil used by men as a hair dressing. The original antimacassar was almost invariably made of white crochet-work, very stiff, hard and quite uncomfortable. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, they became less fussy and were made of soft coloured stuffs, usually worked with a simple pattern in tinted wools or silk. Robert Edis recommended that they should be 'of some good embroidered stuff or well-designed crewel work, fixed securely to the chair or sofa backs, so as not to be liable to be carried off as pendants to the fringe of a lady's dress or to the buttons of a gentleman's coat' (1881, p.193).

A more serviceable, though less attractive, alternative to the antimacassar was suggested in 1840. *The Workwoman's Guide* proposed 'a kind of case of Holland to fit half way down the [back] cushion which protects the cover from being soiled by the head on leaning back. Each arm chair should have two or three of these cases for wash and wear' (Hale, p.206). Antimacassars remained popular well into the twentieth century and were usually associated with the three-piece suite. See also **Antimacassar pin**, **Headrest**.

Antimacassar pin

U-shaped pin designed to hold antimacassars in place.

Antique satin

See **Satin**.

Antique taffeta

See **Taffeta**.

Antique textile

Although furnishing textiles have been recycled for centuries, it was during the second half of the nineteenth century that the use of antique textiles in furnishing schemes became a particular fashion. Unwanted shawls, **lace** and embroideries were all used to drape furniture or to be applied to **portières**, **curtains**, etc. Not everyone considered this to be appropriate. Writing in 1889, in her *Art of Decoration*, Mrs Haweis commented: 'the recent fashion of covering chair-seats with exquisite antique silks, old brocades and delicate feather-work is a waste of good things which were better applied elsewhere' (p.219). On the other hand, another female commentator, Mrs Watson, enthusiastically explained in her *The Art of the House* the attraction of old fabrics. Talking of **fire-place curtains**, she suggested that the 'things that are pre-eminently more excellent for this purpose are antique brocades or broderies whose dyes have been harmonized, whose designs are blurred by time, the master-decorator' (1897, p.487).

In the USA, a similar taste was evident. In *Our Homes and Their Adornments*, Almon Varney discussed the use of 'very old portieres ... brought home by travellers from the East, including Smyrna, and imported in great quantities'. He added that 'stripes of old woollen stuff, loosely caught together by coarse woollen cord, and embroidered evidently by hand [in] odd combinations of red, black and white, can be seen in fashionable houses' (1883, pp 262–3).

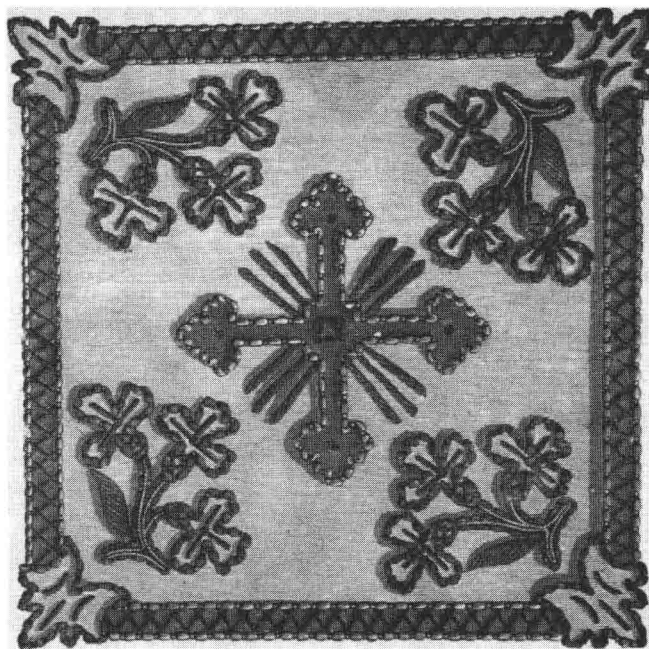
Old fabrics were again used in decorative interiors in the 1920s. The American *House Beautiful Furnishing Annual* of 1926 commented that antique fabrics were: 'procurable, in better or worse states of preservation, and in the case of those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in some numbers'. This taste encouraged manufacturers to produce imitations and copies using old designs as well as employing 'dusty' colours and shabby effects. In 1950, *The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms* commented on textiles woven with slub yarns as being interesting through the 'wonderful "shabby" effect that has been achieved. None of these looks in the least new ... and ... appear as having been mellowed by time' (Schoeser and Rufey, 1989, p.176).

The revival of a taste for Victorian interiors from the 1960s again encouraged a taste for 'antique' textiles, which have become collectables in their own right as well as providing decorative accessorisation. Reissues of woven or printed designs from the archives of manufacturers, collections or museums, sometimes called 'document fabrics', also found a niche in furnishing schemes of the second half of the twentieth century. The demand for accurate textiles to furnish historic interiors has, in part, prompted this, but commercial demand has also been a factor.

See also **Brocade**.

Appliqué (aka Laid-on work)

Appliqué is a method of **embroidery** decoration that is applied onto the base material rather than worked into it directly. Although it may refer to other materials, it usually suggests various textiles cut out in decorative shapes, which are then applied onto the surface of another fabric with an embroidery **stitch** or by **couching**. By using contrasting colours and fabric types often upon a plain ground, the result can create a three-dimensional effect. During the Elizabethan and early Stuart times, plant and animal motifs, worked on **canvas**, were often cut out and fixed to plain ground fabrics, frequently **velvet**, for use as **cushions** and hangings. The Spangled Bed at Knole, covered in red **satin** with applied **cloth of gold** and silver, made in the early seventeenth century, is a superb example of the process. Other fine examples are found in Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire.



3. Appliqué pattern designed for a cushion (S. Caulfeild & B. Saward, *The Dictionary of Needlework*, 1887)

The practice never went away entirely and became fashionable again in the nineteenth century. Mrs Orrinsmith, writing in *The Drawing Room*, suggested that 'heavy patterns worked upon Holland, cut out and sewn on serge and cloth, with an edging of filoselle or twisted silk make decorations suitable for portières' (1877, p.73). In the following year, American author, Hudson Holly, favourably remarked on **curtains** made of 'unbleached linen, with stripes of blue and red flannel sewed upon its surface and [with] black lines of narrow velvet' (1878, p.213).

In the twentieth century, 'appliqué **borders** applied to ready-made curtains of **Bolton sheeting**, taffeta or satin rep' were offered for sale (Williamson & Cole Co, 1912). Appliqué was also recommended in the 1930s as a particularly suitable effect on **pelmet**s, especially if it was carried out in a free manner and not as a set pattern.

Reverse appliqué (*découpé*) has a fabric sewn underneath the top cloth, which is cut away to reveal the under cloth.

See also **Bobbin net**, **Couching**, **Lace**, **Needlework**, **Needlework seating**, **Patchwork**, **Trimming**, **White-work**.

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Aquatic grass

Any grassy plant that grows in or near water is called an aquatic. It produces fibres that may be used in matting or **upholstery**.

See also **Grass**, **Matting**.

Arabian lace

See **Lace**.

Archway curtain

Curtains that are planned and cut to fit interior architectural features such as archways and curved detail, as opposed to a simple rectangular drape over the space. They were especially popular during the late

nineteenth century and early twentieth century as framing devices for internal doors, passages and openings.

See also **Portière**.

Argentine cloth

See **Tarlatan**.

Argyle gimp

See **Gimp**.

Armazine (aka Armozeen)

Armazine (*armoisin* in French) is a lightweight **silk taffeta**-like fabric, often black. Although used for clerics' gowns and mourning attire, it was also used for hangings and **curtains**.

By the eighteenth century, it was imported into England from Lyon in France, as well as from Italy and the East Indies. Postlethwayt identifies two varieties: *arains*, which was striped or **checked**, and *damaris*, which was flowered. He also described 'armozeen' in general terms as a 'silk stuff, or kind of taffety, of an indifferent goodness. It is made at Lyons and in several places in Italy'. East Indian armozeens were 'slightly inferior to those made in Europe and of an inferior quality. Their colours, and particularly the crimson and red, are commonly false, and they have but little gloss and no brightness at all' (Postlethwayt, 1751). The Chiswick House inventory of 1770 shows that there were 'three blue Armozeen festoon window curtains' (Rosoman, 1986, p.98). In 1752, Richard Carr, mercer, was paid £34.2s.0d. for 62 yards of Armurine, supplied to Lady Leicester at Holkham House (Beard, 1997, p.304).

In the nineteenth century, a heavier ribbed version of armazine was used for **portières**, curtains and covers. However, Caulfeild & Saward defined it as 'a strong make of thick plain black corded silk, a kind of taffeta, employed for scholastic gowns and for hatbands and scarves at funerals' (1887, p.14).

Armure

A broad class of fabrics with 'pebbled' surfaces that are produced by figures or textures woven on a **rep** base or a figured weave. The name may be derived from an original fabric, which was woven with a small-interlaced design of chain armour and used for military equipment during the Crusades, or alternatively from the French word *armoires* for coat-of-arms. Caulfeild & Saward suggested that it was derived from the French *armure*, where the name was applied to **silk** or **wool** and meant a small pattern. They also noted a satin armure and armure bosphore (1887, p.14). Originally, armure was a heavy silk fabric with this pebbly effect. It was later made from a range of fibres, but especially **cotton**, silk, wool, **rayon**, synthetics and blends. Woven in plain, twill or rib, the background often has a small pattern made with **warp** floats on the surface to give a raised effect. 'When a jacquard figure is introduced on a rep background, it is called armure.' (Denny, 1928, p.83)

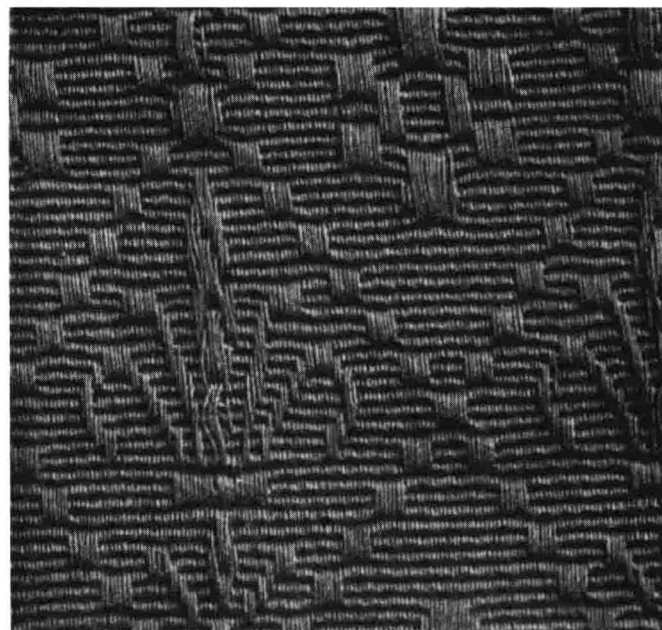
In America during the early twentieth century, armure was recommended for **couch covers** and **portières** (Dyer, c.1923, p.202). It was also used for other furnishing purposes. Mrs Northend discussed a room where 'One ivory enamel dressing table has the fronts of drawers, sides and top of blue silk figured armure.' (1921, p.256.) In England, armure was particularly recommended for loose covers and portières (Smithells, 1950). In the 1950s, it was mainly used for seating materials and, on occasion, **bedspreads** and slipcovers.

Arras

A generic name used in England for **wall coverings** or hanging screens placed around the walls of a room. Arras was a recognised source of such materials. Tapestry factories were established in Arras during the late thirteenth century, and were so well known that the town gave its name to any wall covering used in the period. By the mid-fifteenth century, the factories had declined in popularity as **Tournai** overtook them, but they remained in business until early in the sixteenth century and the term has since referred to tapestry of any manufacture.

The difference between arras and tapestry appears to be one of quality, although the distinctions are blurred. By 1558, arras was defined as tapestry with gold [thread] called Arras and was therefore more valued than **hair** or **wool** tapestry work. Arras was used in a range of interior situations including hangings, **cupboard cloths**, **bed furniture**, **costers**, **dorcers** and **cushions**. An early reference is from 1397, where the will of John of Gaunt listed 'drapes d'Arras'. Henry VI had 'one tapite d'arras pur le cupbord' (*Rot. Parl.*, II, Henry VI), whilst Cecily, Duchess of York, owned 'a bed of arras', and Lord Richard Scrope of Bolton owned four 'costers de opera d'arras' (Leaf, p.6). A little later, the *Wardrobe Accounts of Edward IV* (1461–1483) listed an arras-mender who was 'hourly in the wardrobe for working upon arras and tapestry' (Nicholas, 1830). Over 100 years later, a different use was listed in the 1611 Hatfield inventory: 'three window Clothes of Arras worke wrought with silk and lyned with satten abridges' (Beard, 1997, p.286).

Counterfeit arras was a name given to a distinct material that was different from tapestry and also from **painted cloth** upon which the decorative scenes, familiar from tapestry work, were painted. It seems likely that counterfeit arras was a fine quality tapestry but without the metallic threads as in the authentic arras. In the will of Henry Sever, dated 1471, he wishes his '*banker de counterfeit arras dividanture inter servientes meos*' (*Testamenta Ebor.*, vol.III, p.189). In 1507, the Archbishop of York, being in debt to the King, surrendered his effects including 'all the Arras as well the fine arras as counterfeit Arras' (*Testamenta Ebor.*, vol.IV, p.311).



4. Example of armure weave showing the distinctive raised effects (G.L. Hunter, *Decorative Textiles, Coverings for Furniture etc.*, 1918)

See also **Arras cloth**, **Tapestry**, **Verdure**, **Window cloth**.

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Campbell, T. (1995–6). 'Tapestry quality in Tudor England: problems of terminology', *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 3, pp 29–50.

Arras cloth

A twentieth-century term for a loosely woven **jute** cloth produced in a range of widths and shades and used for **curtains**, and table and cushion covers (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950). It appears that it was particularly popular in the USA. The American author, Mabel Priestman, extolled the virtues of arras cloth early in the twentieth century.

Arras cloth, or craftsman's canvas, has been a joy to the privileged few who happened to know where and how it could be obtained. Happily, it can now be bought at one or more shops in every city. It is very like every-day burlap in weave, and is made of a mixture of linen and cotton. It possesses a slight variation in texture that is very desirable in draperies. It is made in Scotland in a wide range of colors, which fade so little with years of wear, that the effect is only a softening of tone. It is now obtainable in linen color as well as the art shades. People who have always appreciated linens enjoy those with a coarse mesh called 'bloom linens'. They are an inspiration for making appliqué upon Arras cloth or other shades of linen. (Priestman, 1910, p.119.)

Arras cloth was particularly associated with the American Mission style and oak furniture of the early twentieth century.

See also **Arras**.

Artificial horsehair

An imitation of horsehair made from viscose **rayon** of a heavy denier with either a round or flat filament. Another version was described in 1924: 'Certain grasses are treated for a brief period with concentrated sulphuric acid or chloride of zinc, rendering the fiber very strong, elastic and similar in appearance to real horsehair.' (Harmuth, 1924, p.9)

See also **Hair**, **Haircloth**.

Art canvas

See **Craftsman canvas**.

Art embroidery (aka Art needlework)

A category of secular needlework that developed out of ecclesiastical embroidery during the second half of the nineteenth century. The use of **silk**, **crewel** threads and **appliqué** techniques often distinguish it. The 'art' designation referred to the freedom of the embroiderer to select not only the design, but also the **stitch** type direction and colouring to be used. *The Dictionary of Needlework* published in 1887 explained that art needlework was a term 'recently introduced ... for all descriptions of needlework that spring from the application of a knowledge of design and colouring, with skill in fitting and executing' (Caulfield & Seward, p.14). The art embroidery movement was an attempt to restore secular embroidery to its proper place in the arts. It was also partly a reaction by a small group to the excesses of the mid-nineteenth century **Berlin wool-work**, aniline **dyes** and unsophisticated patterns.

The Royal School of Needlework was the first to initiate such moves, and these were followed by regional British developments such as the Leek Embroidery Society. This movement also found followers in the USA where schools of needlework were established in Philadelphia,

Boston, Chicago and elsewhere. The London-based School of Art Needlework (later the Royal School) promoted the serious study of old needlework and its adoption in the period from 1872 onwards. The revival of art needlework was a result of the developments of ecclesiastical embroidery, which itself paved the way for development in twentieth-century embroidery work.

See also **Embroidery**, **Needlework**.

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Lambert, Miss (1842). *Handbook of Needlework*, London: John Murray.

Morris, B. (1962). *Victorian Embroidery*, London: Herbert Jenkins.

Schoeser, M. (1998). *The Watts Book of Embroidery, English Church Embroidery 1833–1953*, London: Watts and Co (especially ch.2, C. Weaver, 'My life is an embroidery').

Art linen

Plain-weave **linen** cloth, woven with even threads that are particularly suitable for **embroidery**, as they are easy to draw out. It is supplied either bleached or coloured, and is commonly used to produce embroidered **cushion** covers, **tablecloths** and centres. Art linen was especially popular in the early twentieth century.

Art muslin

A loose term for fine **cotton** dyed or printed fabrics with a glazed finish, used in the **upholstery** trade (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950). In the 1908 novel, *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, a room was described as having 'the floor covered with a pretty matting, and the curtains that softened the high window and fluttered in the vagrant breezes were of pale-green art muslin' (ch.33).

See also **Muslin**.

Art serge

A heavy, coarse **woollen** fabric with a fibrous surface, usually twill woven and piece-dyed, often in a dark green colouring. T. French suggested that art serge was suitable for **table covers**, dress, draw and **portière** curtains (*Book of Soft Furnishing*, 1937, p.68).

See also **Serge**.

Art silk (aka Artificial silk)

A rayon acetate blended fabric that resembles **silk**. It was developed by Comte Hilaire de Chardonnet in 1884. The term was used in the 1920s as an abbreviation of artificial silk, and the material was used for furnishings by that time. Elizabeth Dyer explained that 'Art silk [is] like China silk but a little stiffer, and with dull luster. An inexpensive, soft texture used in **lining** curtains or lampshades, but too thin to use alone. The name is sometimes applied to casement cloth or to artificial silk fabrics used for glass curtains as well as draperies' (Dyer, c.1923, p.203). Commenting on the question of imitation in 1924, the French designer Bénédictus wrote in *Art et Décoration*, that:

I am aware that [art silk] has found a use in furnishings. But it has been considered as a shameful substitute, a simple counterfeit of real silk, and to make the public buy, we ask [art silk] to supply at a cheaper rate the same sumptuous effects as real silk.

He went on to point out that these cloths had 'an aggressive shine, vulgar colours' and 'a glassy look' and realised that 'a new material needed a new aesthetic' (Schoeser & Dejardin, 1991, p.183).

In 1937, art silk, made up in plain or fancy weaves, was apparently used widely in British home furnishings: 'With the exception of plain artificial silks, (rayon) which are largely used for dress or drawer curtains, slub, fancy weaves and brocades are largely used for drawer curtains and valances. Plain taffetas are especially suitable for bedspreads and cushions' (French, 1937, p.67).

By the 1950s, the use of the term art silk was deemed misleading and was gradually discontinued.

See also **China silk**, **Rayon**.

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Art square

A power-woven Kidderminster **ingrain carpet** (flat, non-pile reversible two- or three-ply carpets) produced in seamless 'squares', often finished with a **border** and a **fringe**. This nineteenth-century invention was an important product that widened the market for carpets. In 1885, *The Kidderminster Shuttle* explained its popularity:

A handsome seamless 'square' with artistic border, leaving a margin of flooring all round, is more attractive and convenient. It is more easily and therefore more frequently taken up of cleaning operations; many of the patterns are reversible, as good one side as on the other; and though an honest, good carpet, it is cheap. (Bartlett, 1978, p.78.)

The American mail order company, Montgomery Ward, advertised 'Jute Art Squares' and 'Leicestershire Art Squares' in their 1895 catalogue. The jute squares were specified for use as 'crumb cloths, druggett or rugs to cover worn areas of carpet'. While in 1912, the English retailers, Williamson & Cole, advertised 'Reversible Art Squares'.

When laying the square of carpet in a room it was usual to leave an 18 inch (46 cm) border around it, which might be left plain or covered with **linoleum** or **felt**.

See also **Chlidema square**, **Habberley carpet**, **Ingrain carpet**, **Kidderminster carpet**, **Smyrna rug**.

Art ticking

A particular form of **mattress upholstery** material that was more decorative than the traditional striped tickings. It was 'distinguished from regular bed ticking by its printed design, usually in stripes of pink, green or blue combination, often with small floral pattern'. It was used for 'mattress and pillow covers and sometimes as cretonne' (Denny, 1923, p.17). This description was confirmed in the 1920s when art tickings were described as 'printed floral fabrics of ticking weave, employed to provide more decorative covers for mattresses, pillows etc; Now a material contemporaneous in purpose and appearance to cretonne' (Stephenson, 1926). This definition was still current in the 1950s (*The Mercury Dictionary of Textile Terms*, 1950).

See also **Mattress-making**, **Ticking**.

Asphalt tile

Hard surface floorcovering developed in the 1920s but not put into mainstream production until the 1940s. Interestingly, by the late 1940s there was no asphalt in the composition, it being made from synthetic resins with an asbestos binder. It was a major competitor to **linoleum**. See also **Felt-base**.

Astrakan

A **pile** fabric using curled **mohair** yarns on a **cotton** or **woollen** base, woven to resemble the fur of the Astrakan sheep. It was 'occasionally used as a trimming for upholstery purposes in the West End trade' (French, 1947).

Atlas

A fabric that was certainly known in England by 1687 (*London Gazette*, no.2273/7). The name was originally derived from the Arabic *atlas*, meaning 'smooth silk' (**satin**). It was a rich **cotton warp** and **silk weft** fabric, woven with a satin surface in a striped or flowered pattern. It was most fashionable at the end of the seventeenth century and in the early eighteenth century. Daniel Defoe wrote c.1690 that at Windsor Castle, 'the late Queen Mary set up a rich Atlas and Chintz bed, which in those times was invaluable, the chintz being of Masulipatam on the coast of Coromandel' (*A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britian*, vol.1, letter 3). In the same year, John Hervey 'paid Mrs Cawne for a rich piece of India Atlas for dear wife £13.10.0d' (Macquoid & Edwards, 1924, p.7). Its fashionable status meant that it was not long before imitations were made in England. In July 1702, the *London Gazette* published an advertisement for 'rich atlases in imitation of those made in India' (Edwards, 1964, p.22).

A decade later, atlas fabric was still seen as exotic. Pierre Motteux, who kept an 'India shop' in London, was, in 1712, offering 'rich brocades, Dutch atlases, with gold and silver or without, and other foreign silks of the newest modes' (*Spectator*, 30 January 1712). In another example, the material was not apparently highly valued. In the 1710 Dyrham inventory, there were 'a dozen of atlas cushions in a chest', located in the garret over the brew house lumber-room (Walton, 1986, p.66). On the other hand, Celia Fiennes praised the material on her visit to Fetcham Park in 1712, where she saw through a window 'one ground bedchamber which was an Indian attlass [sic] white very fine' (1995, p.240).

The Duke of Chandos at his house Canons, in 1747, had his dressing room **curtains**, hangings and chair covering of green and gold atlas. Contemporary compilers of encyclopedias were also aware of and impressed by its qualities. In 1751, *The Universal Dictionary* noted that:

It must be owned that the manufacture of them [atlas] is wonderful and singular; and that especially in the flowered atlases, the gold and silk are worked together after such a manner as no workman in Europe can imitate; but yet they are very far from having that finer gloss and lustre which the French know how to give their silk stuffs. (Postlethwayt, 1751.)

Ten years later, *A New Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* described atlas as 'A silk satin fabric, manufactured in the East Indies, whereof some are plain, striped, or flowered... It must be confessed that the manufacture is admirable particularly in the flowered atlases the gold and silk being employed therein after a manner inimitably European' (Rolt, 1761).

By the later nineteenth century, 'atlas' was defined as the generic name for satin in many European languages (Beck, 1882), although it was still recognised as a rich Indian satin in the early twentieth century.

Attachment method

Drape, upholstery and soft furnishings require a wide range of attachment methods for the various parts of the work undertaken, whether for curtains and drapes, upholstery or floorcoverings.

See also **Adhesive**, **Buttoning**, **Carpet fitting and planning**, **Curtain pole and rod**, **Four-point platform**, **Hook and loop**, **Rubber webbing**, **Stair rod**, **Stitch**, **Tack**, **Webbing**.

Aubusson carpet

Smooth-faced tapestry woven **carpets** were produced at Aubusson in the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Carpets made with a knotted **pile** were also made at Aubusson from around 1742 as well as **Brussels carpets**. These carpets were produced in large volumes in the nineteenth century when wall hangings were less fashionable. Often they were designed in order to produce a particularly charming and delicate effect.

See also **Aubusson tapestry**, **Moquette carpet**.

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Sherrill, S.B. (1996). *Carpets and Rugs of Europe and America*, New York: Abbeville, pp 96–108.

Aubusson tapestry

A group of workshops established by the early sixteenth century that operated in the workers' own homes around the villages of Aubusson and Felletin. The enterprise received an official charter in 1665 but, as most of the weavers were Huguenots, it suffered a decline after 1685. The business revived in the 1730s and during the nineteenth century made reproductions of earlier designs. In the twentieth century, Jean Lurcat and other modern artists such as Graham Sutherland and Raoul Dufy supplied cartoons.

See also **Aubusson carpet**, **Tapestry**.

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Austrian blanket

See **Blanket**.

Austrian shade (aka Austrian blind)

Mid-nineteenth-century commentators noted that 'these are called by upholsterers festoon curtains and were very general before the French manner was introduced of making them slide on a rod' (Webster & Parkes, 1844, p.250). One commentator in the later nineteenth century referred to them as always being made of **silk** (Moreland, 1889, p.172). They were revived in the later twentieth century where the distinction between festoon and Austrian curtains was that the Austrian remained ruched at the bottom even when fully let down. (Festoon curtains were ruched along the whole length.) In the later twentieth century, Austrian **blinds** were also often made from 'net' type materials.

See also **Austrian shade cloth**, **Balloon shade**, **Casement cloth**, **Festoon**, **Krinkle**, **Plissé**, **Ruche**, **Venetian curtain**.

Austrian shade cloth

A **seersucker** type of fabric woven from mercerised **cotton**, which was woven with wide stripes and used for bed furnishings and **curtains** and **awnings**. The description and use is explained in this passage from *Textile Fabrics*:

Casement cloth and plisse are being used widely in the place of blinds. Plisse has alternate stripes of crêpe and plain surface. It is heavier than the plisse used for clothing, and is frequently called Austrian shade cloth. Plisse shades are finished with a braid or fringe and are so arranged that they pull up and down by means of cords with tassels. (Dyer, c.1923. p.206.)

See also **Austrian shade**, **Casement cloth**, **Plissé**.

Awning

Awnings, referred to in the Renaissance as *tende*, were initially a cloth draped on a frame and fixed to the wall, while a pole, supported on brackets, protruding from the wall, allowed it to cut out sun but permit air circulation. Awnings, often adapted from sails, were also used in hot climes as sun protection.

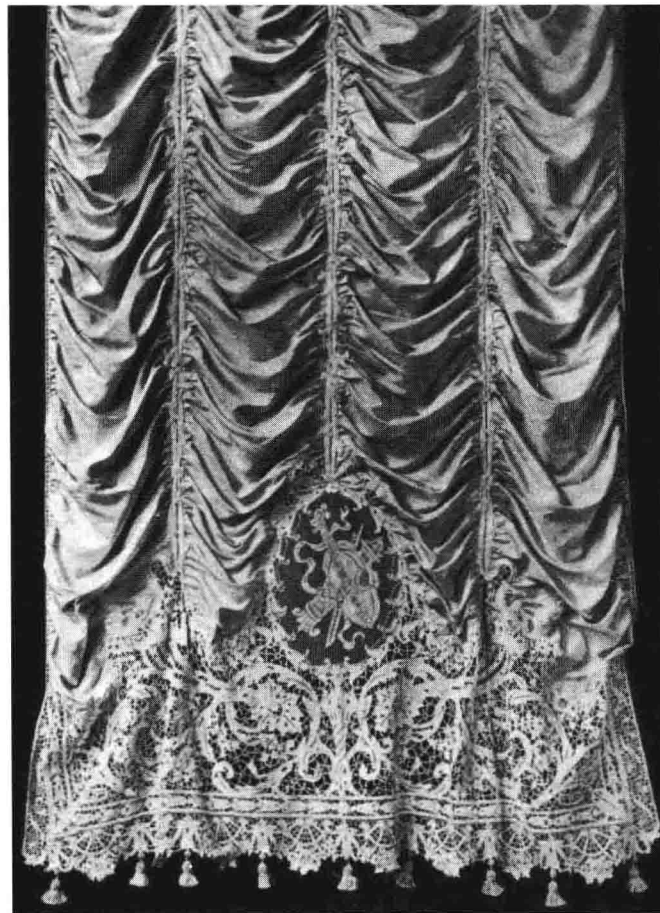
The Venetian fan **blind**, which has a Venetian blind and two side blinds that can be pulled up together on the outside of the window to regulate light and air, was a nineteenth-century version (Loudon, 1839, p.270).

In 1907, Hasluck showed how outside sun-blinds were used to screen painted front doors in the form of an awning. The term still refers to shades of various sorts, often for use outdoors.

See also **Bonnet blind**, **Duck**, **Venetian blind**.

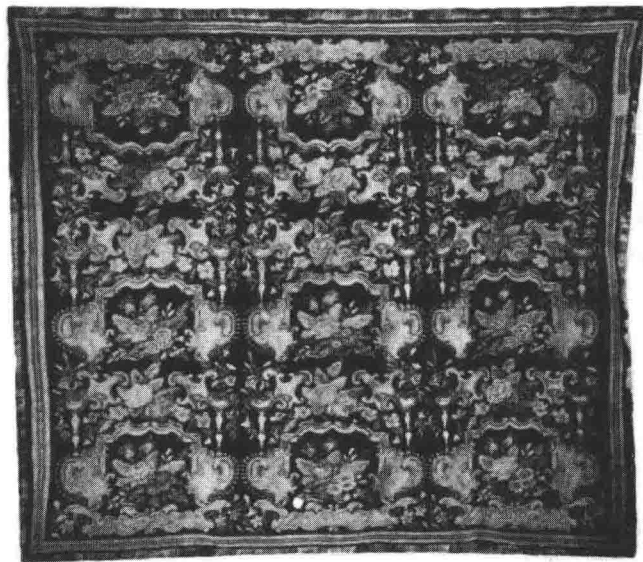
Axminster carpet (Hand-knotted)

Hand-knotted **carpets** that were originally made in the English town of Axminster in Devon. Thomas Whitty started the manufacture of these carpets in Axminster in 1755. Whitty was encouraged by the Royal Society of Arts which, in 1756, offered premiums for the best carpets not measuring less than 15 by 12 feet (4½ by 3½ metres), made after the manner of Turkish carpets. Although Thomas Moore won the premium in 1757, and Claude Passavant won it in 1758, Whitty shared in both prizes, and in 1759 won outright in the third round.



5. Luxurious early twentieth-century Austrian shades (G.L. Hunter, *Decorative Textiles, Coverings for Furniture etc.*, 1918)

6. A hand-tufted Axminster carpet, probably eighteenth century (C. Faraday, *European and American Carpets and Rugs, 1929*)



The Axminster factory was an attraction for visitors and it is thanks to them we have a view of the workings. Mrs Abigail Adams described the workshops in 1778 in a letter to an American correspondent:

The manufactory of carpets is wholly performed by women and children. You would have been surprised to see in how ordinary a building this rich manufactory was carried on... They have but two prices for their carpets woven here; the one is eighteen shillings a yard, and the other twenty-four a square yard. They are woven of any dimensions you please, and without a seam. The colours are most beautiful, and the carpets very durable (Roth, 1967, p.41).

In 1777, Samuel Curwen visited the factory and wrote: 'here is also wrought, besides his own, of a peculiar construction, Turkey carpet. So very like in figure, colour and thickness as not to be distinguished from the genuine article' (ibid. p.42).

Whitty's factory was also visited in 1791 by E.D. Clarke in his *Tour through the South of England*. He described the weaving process, and in particular how:

the work is chiefly done by women. We saw forty of these employed; the pattern lays before them and with their fingers they weave the whole. This they execute with great quickness, and it is amusing to observe how fast the most elegant designs are traced out by the fingers of old women and children. (Macquoid & Edwards, 1924, p.194.)

The products of the factory were highly esteemed. The Revd Thomas Moore wrote in his *History of Devonshire from Earliest Times to the Present* (1829–31) that the 'carpets [of Axminster] were never in higher repute than at present. His Majesty's Palaces at Brighton and Windsor are graced by the labours of the women of Axminster as are also the mansions and countryseats of the nobility.' Despite this endorsement, the factory closed in 1835. Moore's explanation of the work involved may explain the demise:

The thickness of these fabrics being greater than any others of the kind, and the quantity of raw materials used in the manufacture of them being consequently large, – the labour, as the work is done by the fingers, being minute and tedious, – and considerable sums, occa-

sionally thirty or forty pounds being spent on the pattern, the price of them is necessarily high.

In fact, production moved to the town of Wilton in 1835 and remained there until well into the twentieth century.

See also **Axminster carpet (Machine woven)**, **Chenille Axminster**, **Imperial Axminster**, **Kurastan**.

FURTHER READING

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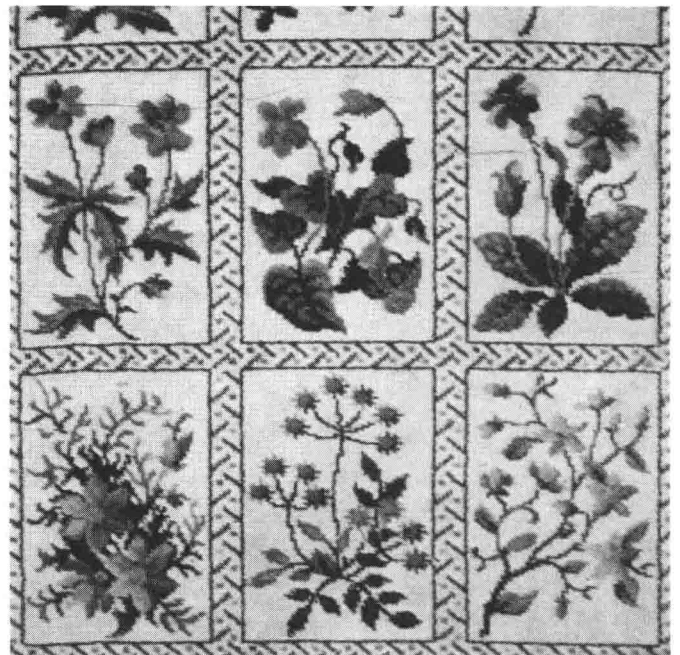
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Axminster carpet (Machine woven)

The machine process of weaving **carpets** is completely different to the hand-knotting method. There are three weaving methods: chenille, gripper and spool. Between 1876 and 1877, Americans Halycon Skinner and Alexander Smith developed technical improvements in mechanised **pile** carpet weaving. Manufacturers Tomkinson and Adam, in Kidderminster, soon introduced these techniques into England. The products were based on the concept of mechanically inserting tufts, from pre-wound spools of yarn prepared according to the design, into the **warp** threads initially, and later into the **weft** threads. The yarn for each weft row is wound on a separate spool in accordance with the pattern progression. The yarns are cut at the point of presentation to the warps and the tufts inserted. The benefits included an unlimited colour range. In 1884, the British company Brinton acquired the rights to develop the 'nipper' or 'gripper' mechanism, which was patented by



7. A machine-woven Axminster carpet, c.1960 (Stoddard and Co)