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Madelyn Shaw

*Rhode Island School of Design*

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# American Silk from a Marketing Magician: H.R. Mallinson & Co.

Madelyn Shaw

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Hiram Royal Mallinson, an ambitious and talented son of mid-nineteenth-century immigrants from Poland, entered the silk trade in 1893 as a salesman for the company of Pelgram & Meyer in Paterson, New Jersey. Just two years later Mallinson joined a new firm, Newwitter & Migel, headquartered in New York City, as head of sales. In 1900, Migel and Mallinson bought out Newwitter and renamed the firm M.C. Migel & Co.<sup>1</sup>

Migel and Mallinson consciously targeted the novelty market and the high-end or “class” customer generally conceded to European concerns at the time. The company was regarded as progressive, its output of excellent quality and a credit to the American industry.<sup>2</sup> Migel retired from active participation in the firm in 1903, leaving Mallinson in charge—a position he maintained until 1931. His company’s long-term success within a turbulent industry was founded on a solid reputation for quality silks and, perhaps more importantly, on marketing practices not yet common in his day: buying or generating the right publicity, cultivating all potential consumers, and anticipating—even creating—consumer demand for novelty.<sup>3</sup>

Until 1913, M.C. Migel & Co. concentrated primarily on woven textures and jacquard-woven designs. In the years between 1900 and 1913, the firm offered many innovative fabrics, such as “Waterette” waterproof taffeta, “Matora” pongee for the emerging motorist market, and “Madame Butterfly” marquisette. All competed against the luxury imports from Europe and the few other high-end American products. The company’s printed silks kept to prevailing Paris fashions, usually in simple color combinations that suited the relative lack of skill within the American silk-printing industry at this time.<sup>4</sup>

In November 1912, Migel sold his interest in the company to Mallinson. In early 1914, Mallinson stepped up his campaign against European competitors, introducing the *Mexixe* line of printed silks. [fig.1] This series took advantage of Mexico’s prominence

<sup>1</sup> Company history has been pieced together from many sources, most importantly *Davison’s Silk Trade*, *Davison’s Textile Blue Book*, *The American Silk Journal*, and *The New York Times*.

<sup>2</sup> Franklin Allen, “Silk Notes From Paris,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 19, no. 9 (Sept 1900), pp. 21-26.

<sup>3</sup> E.M. Wickes, “The Former Cash Boy Who Heads America’s Greatest Silk Business,” in *Sales Management*, vol. 7 (July 1924), pp. 1217-18, 1306.

<sup>4</sup> William Willheim, “The Growth and Development of Silk Printing,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4 (April 1921), pp. 51-54; and Karl E.W. Mueller, “The Genesis of Silk Printing,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 46, no. 5 (May 1927: “Paper II”), pp. 39-44; vol. 46, no. 6 (June 1927: “Paper III”), pp. 43-44, 50.



Fig.1 M.C. Migel & Co. *Mexixe* sample card. 1914. Courtesy of the Department of Textiles, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

in the news due to the American war against Pancho Villa. The designs were based on Aztec, Mexican, and American Indian art, and although they were certainly influenced by European aesthetics, the underlying theme was an American original, not a variation on a French idea. The printing, in multiple colors on saturated grounds, challenged European supremacy in that art. The fabrics were used by several Paris couturiers, endorsing this upstart American attempt at original design.<sup>5</sup> It was a stunning critical and sales success for the company and a notable first for the American industry. In its wake, Mallinson changed the company's name to his own in January 1915.

*Mexixe* gave the company a reputation for creativity that was enhanced through modern marketing techniques. In 1910, the company had opened its own advertising department, which directed print advertising in national magazines, trade journals, major newspapers, even theater programs. The department also published its own promotional materials and arranged what might be termed outreach campaigns such as lectures, fashion shows, contests, and exhibitions. Every potential market was addressed: the retail silk merchant, custom dressmaker, ready-to-wear manufacturer, and the individual consumer.<sup>6</sup>

All Migel and Mallinson fabrics were given widely publicized trade names. These names helped establish a strong market identity then and now help to reveal the company's customers. Some were long-lived, others lasted just a season or two. Reviews of fashion shows, ads for garment manufacturers or retail shops, and dress-pattern magazines often mention costumes made of "Pussy Willow" or "Khaki-Kool" or "Indestructible Voile," without using the Mallinson name at all.<sup>7</sup> [fig.2] The company zealously guarded its

<sup>5</sup> See "M.C. Migel & Co. Change Name to H.R. Mallinson & Co.," in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 34, no. 1 (January 1915), p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> For targeting the custom dressmakers, see J.F. McCandless, "Reminiscent of Early Silk Buying Days," in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 33, no. 2 (February 1914), pp. 31-32. For using the French model of cooperation between fabric and garment manufacturers see "A Fabric and Fashion Demonstration," in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 37, no. 12 (December 1918), p. 60. Many Mallinson to-the-trade ads maintain that the company's direct advertising to the public made it easier for retailers to sell Mallinson goods.

<sup>7</sup> For example: *Vogue*, vol. 57, no. 1 (January 1, 1921), p. 3, ad for Franklin Simon & Co., "Women's Pussy Willow Silk Underthings;" *Vogue*, vol. 52, no. 6 (September 15, 1918), p. 12, ad for "The Black Line" dresses, one frock of Georgette Crepe and "Pussy Willow;" *The Boston Herald* (October 4, 1925), rotogravure section, p. 2, ad for Thresher Brothers, "The Daylight Specialty Silk Store," mentions "Pussy Willow" by name in fabric list.

products and reputation. In 1914, it began to patent new fabrics, a costly and time-consuming process, and in 1915 added a selvage stamp to the “Pussy Willow” line to foil copyists. By 1917, as a symbol of the firm’s guarantee of quality, each yard or dress length was inscribed with the company name.

Slogans and catch phrases were used repeatedly in print ads, reinforcing the association of the company and its silks with the concepts of quality and originality. The company’s graphic design was as progressive as its textile design, employing photography in the early teens when it was still uncommon, and illustrations by artists such as Winold Reiss, Homer Conant, and Mary MacKinnon. The company’s ads were often full page, sometimes in color, and usually styled in line with the current fashion in art. Illustrations might be signed, but rarely did the company credit a textile design to an artist, even in a trade journal.<sup>8</sup> Mallinson was the important name.



Fig.2 Bonwit Teller Co. “Pussy Willow” lingerie ad. *Vogue*, January 1, 1921 p.3.

In 1911, the company held its first mass-marketing campaign, naming the week of March 20 “Butterfly Week” in the “class stores of America.”<sup>9</sup> The concept was revived in 1919 as “Mallinson Silk Week” and became an annual event, with prizes given for the best retail window displays. In 1916, Mallinson’s Merchandising Services Department began publishing a catalogue, the *Blue Book of Silks de Luxe*, sent to apparel manufacturers and retail silk outlets. It served as a guide to using the new line, containing hints on window dressing and pictures of models in Mallinson fabrics by the best names in American and French fashion.<sup>10</sup> In 1927, *Mallinson’s Silky Way*, a monthly style sheet, was introduced. Retailers could also request “clip-art” illustrations to use in their own ads. The company left nothing to chance in how it would be presented to the public.

<sup>8</sup> The exceptions are the “History of the Loom” design by Martha Ryther from 1923 and the Hopi design for the *American Indian* series from 1928, taken from an earlier sketch by Leon Bakst. The Sargasso Sea expedition designs are variously attributed to Helen Tee Van or to the Mallinson design studio after Van’s drawings. Alfred J. Heinke was the design director for decades. Ilonka Karasz, Hazel Burnham Slaughter, and Roger Duvoisin are also known to have designed for the firm.

<sup>9</sup> *Vogue*, vol. 37 no. 3 (March 15, 1911), p. 9, Mallinson ad.

<sup>10</sup> Announced in *The Blue Book of Silks De Luxe*, in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 35, no. 6 (June 1916), p. 40. It was not the first “Blue Book” from a textile firm.

The firm pioneered the use of stage and motion-picture performers in advertisements. The 1914 *Mexixe* booklet, for example, had photos of Irene Castle and Anna Pavlova in the center spread. “Tiger Rose,” a batik-style print, was designed for and named after a Broadway show in 1918, while a new crepe fabrication in 1921 was dubbed “Molly-O” after a hit film of the same name.<sup>11</sup> [fig.3] In the teens the company offered price breaks to producers who would use Mallinson fabrics to dress their shows, in exchange for permission to use photographs of the performers in publicity. By about 1920, association with the company was so valuable that actresses began to demand that their clothes be made from Mallinson goods. At that point the price breaks stopped.<sup>12</sup>



Fig.3 H.R. Mallinson & Co.  
Textile length, “Tiger Rose.” 1920.  
Courtesy of the Department of  
Textiles, NMAH, Smithsonian  
Institution, Washington D.C.

The company was ubiquitous. Fashion Director Carolyn Trowbridge Radnor-Lewis spent a great deal of time on the lecture circuit, taking the Mallinson message across the country in person and, on occasion, over the radio. These lectures were usually sponsored by clubs, schools, or stores, but in 1921 she educated the sales staff of the New York & Brooklyn Casket Company about Mallinson silks for casket linings and custom-made burial clothes.<sup>13</sup> In many of her lectures she also showed the Mallinson Silk film, produced in 1921 and used for several years. Others among the company executives served as judges for textile design contests, such as the annual Art Alliance of America event, to which Mallinson also contributed prize money.<sup>14</sup>

Mallinson products were on regular display at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., starting with the *Mexixe* line in 1914, and were featured at the annual Industrial Art exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the 1919 exhibition at the American

<sup>11</sup> I had speculated in a previous publication that “Molly-O” was named for New York designer Mollie O’Hara.

<sup>12</sup> Discussed in “Mallinson’s Society and Stage Celebrities,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 40, no. 5 (May 1921), p. 56; and in Wickes, “Former Cash Boy.”

<sup>13</sup> *The American Silk Journal*’s personal and market news columns report activities of silk-industry personnel. For example, see “With the Buyer and Seller,” in vol. 41, no. 7 (July 1922), p. 75. Radnor-Lewis’s engagements are listed regularly.

<sup>14</sup> E.I. Hanson was most often mentioned, but H.R. Mallinson and Art Director Alfred J. Heinke also judged occasionally. Other contests were held by New York high schools and the New York School of Applied Art for Women. Prize-winning designs were sometimes used by the company.

Museum of Natural History, New York.<sup>15</sup> They were also shown in venues whose focus was not design or fashion, such as the 1916 Electrical Exposition in New York City, and the New York League of Business and Professional Women’s Convention in 1922. Closer to home, the company’s November 1910 showroom opening for the press and wholesale clients was “the first occasion on which any silk house in the New York market ever gave a display of their fabrics along department store lines.”<sup>16</sup> In 1914, Mallinson commissioned three French and fifteen American custom-designed models to be displayed around the country and within the company showrooms. Showroom displays were expanded in 1918 to include garments in Mallinson fabrics from ready-to-wear manufacturers.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the 1910s and 20s, the company’s products also appeared in fashion shows across the country, sponsored by the Fashion Art League and the National Garment Retailers, among others. [fig.4] These were reviewed in the daily newspapers as well as the trade press.

After years of association with the Migel butterfly logo, Mallinson established a new visual identity in 1921, when artist Willie Pogany created an advertisement with an exotic East Indian theme, realized in three dimensions with a life-size papier-mâché elephant for the Mallinson display at the First International Silk Exposition in New York City. The elephant drew such crowds that B. Altman’s borrowed it to use in their windows for several weeks after the exposition was dismantled. A few months later,



Fig.4 Marian Stehlik and Evans models in Mallinson trademark fabrics, Roshanara and Indestructible Chiffon Velvet, 16th semi-annual Model Creator’s Association fashion show. Mid Week Pictorial July 31, 1924. Clipping from Museum of Art, RISD, Dept. of Costume & Textiles Library.

<sup>15</sup> Correspondence between Smithsonian curator F.L. Lewton and A.J. Heinke between 1914 and 1932 indicates that new fabrics were solicited regularly by the Smithsonian, and the display layout designed by Mallinson’s art department. See the Mallinson accession files, Division of Textiles, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>16</sup> “Display of Migel Silk,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 29, no. 12 (December 1910), p. 66.

<sup>17</sup> “The Migel Demonstration of New Silks in Foreign and American Models,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1 (January 1914), pp. 47-48; this is the only mention of commissioned models. On November 23, 1918, the company began four days of showing advance spring models from Harry Collins made of Mallinson fabrics: “This, in the recollection of the trade, is the first time that a fabric manufacturer has made such a practical use of his fabrics as to demonstrate them in ready models in advance design suggestions for an incoming season;” “A Fabric and Fashion Demonstration,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 37, no. 12 (December 1918), p. 60.

In just a few years these had greatly expanded. The Fall/Winter style show for 1922 had 109 models, beginning with a toddler breaking through a page of a large paper book. There were seven episodes: child, school girl, debutante, bride, matron, business woman, and “Dangerous Age.” The chorus of the Greenwich Village Follies sang interpolated numbers. See “Mallinson’s ‘Seven Ages of Fashion’ Demonstration,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 41, no. 4 (November 1922), p. 56.

Mallinson installed the elephant as a permanent fixture in a window of his newly opened Fifth Avenue showroom—except when it became a roving ambassador, as in the 1923 Mallinson float in the New York Fashion Revue parade. Small-scale versions of the sculpture were sent around the country for use in retail window displays. The elephant became an instantly recognizable Mallinson symbol and continued to be used until the end of the company’s life.<sup>18</sup>



Fig.5 H.R. Mallinson & Co. *Blue Book of Silks de Luxe*, Spring/Summer 1927. “On Top of the Fashion World.” Illustrations of models by noted European and American designers, including Madeleine Vionnet (top left). Background: “Polka Dots Geographique.” Both, Private Collection.

The company insisted on its place in the first rank of silk producers of all nations, proclaiming early on that it was the “national silk of international fame.”<sup>19</sup> The American market and American designers were the mainstay of sales, but the company also did significant business in Latin America and sold to the Paris couture trade even before the First World War disrupted French silk manufacturing.<sup>20</sup> Models by French designers appear in Mallinson publicity throughout the 1910s and 20s, even including Madeleine Vionnet, credited with using “Polka Dots Geographique” in 1927.<sup>21</sup> [fig.5]

Not content with reacting to fashion decrees from Paris, Mallinson actively worked to create demand for his products. The company was credited with starting a vogue for printed linings, advertising these for coats, furs, and suits in the 1910s. A lightweight version of the “Pussy Willow” taffeta was even designed especially as a lining material and guaranteed for two season’s wear. Even more noteworthy was the firm’s development of sport silks, textured weaves that would serve for outdoor and casual wear.

<sup>18</sup> A red elephant logo is stamped on the reverse of a few textiles in the Smithsonian Institution’s collection, and ads for the Mallinson Fabrics Corp. during and after World War II often incorporate the elephant.

<sup>19</sup> H.R. Mallinson & Co. advertisement in *Vogue*, vol. 53, no. 12 (June 15, 1919), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Ad for “Migel Qualité Silks,” in *Harper’s Bazaar*, vol. 49, no. 11 (November 1914), inside back cover. Also “The Blue Book of Silk Success,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 40, no. 12 (December 1921), p. 43, mentions that the latest issue contains an article discussing Mallinson sales in “Paris, London, Brussels, Monte Carlo and the Latin-American countries.”

<sup>21</sup> For example, the *Blue Book of Silks de Luxe* for Spring/Summer 1927 shows Mallinson fabrics “as they have been adapted by the leading style creators.” Besides Vionnet, the credits include French couturiers Patou, Chanel, Paquin, Callot Soeurs, and Goupy, and Americans Sondheim & Levy, Harry Collins, Wm. H. Davidow & Sons, Mayer Chic, Mrs. Ostrander, and Bert Schnurer.

“Khaki-Kool,” among the first, became a Mallinson staple, but new ones were introduced regularly, such as “Fisher Maid” and “Klo-Ka.” The company exploited the wool and cotton shortages during World War I to encourage silk for every month of the year, every purpose around the clock, both sexes, and all age groups—ideas it pursued after the war as well.<sup>22</sup>

Mallinson fabrics often reflected current events or referenced prominent personalities. Customers might choose solid-color fabrics in such shades as “Brighteyes Blue,” named for Princess Mary of Britain at the time of her wedding in 1922, and “Temple Orange,” inspired by the new fruit in 1921. After the success of the *Mexixe* prints, feature print series were introduced every season, in addition to the dozens of single designs and solid colors that probably formed the bulk of sales. Current events figured prominently in 1919’s *La Victoire* prints, introduced a month before the armistice. They included a wartime charm motif from Alsace-Lorraine with the promise that “A Royalty of 5 cents on every yard will be donated to the Fund for the Orphans of Alsace-Lorraine.”<sup>23</sup> In



Fig.6 H.R. Mallinson & Co. Textile length, “Sainte Chapelle le Troisieme.” Courtesy of the American Textile History Museum, Lowell, Mass. 2001.156

1925 a series was based on sketches made by artist Helen Tee Van during the William Beebe expedition to the Sargasso Sea.

The principals of the firm were actively involved in providing new themes. Vice President E. Irving Hanson’s trip to France in 1923 inspired six designs: stained glass windows from Sainte Chapelle and the gardens at Fontainebleau, Versailles, and the Bois de Boulogne. [fig.6] Hiram Mallinson himself was vacationing in Luxor when Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamen’s tomb. Within a few days Mallinson had visited the tomb, cabled home an enthusiastic—and lengthy—description of its riches, and set the firm’s designers to work on its new *Karnavar* line.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> “Silk Dresses as a War Economy,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 37, no. 7 (July 1918), p. 32. In 1922, the Mallinson Fashion shows were entitled “Around the Clock with the Mallinson Girl” (Spring) and “The Seven Ages of Fashion” (Fall). These issues are also discussed in Wickes, “Former Cash Boy,” and “Women in the Silk Industry,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 45, no. 6 (June 1926), p. 51 ff., interview with Mrs. Carolyn Trowbridge Radnor-Lewis.

<sup>23</sup> “A Tribute and a Royalty to France,” in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 38, no. 1 (January 1919), p. 40. This anticipation of events was touted as proof of the company’s ability to forecast the new modes.

<sup>24</sup> “Sure Tomb Designs Will Set New Styles,” in *The New York Times* (February 27, 1923), sect. 6, p. 4. The company made record profits in 1923.



American themes were perennially popular. *State Flower* designs were produced in 1915 and again in 1929. [fig.7] American Indian motifs were used in 1916, based on material in New York's American Museum of Natural History, and again for border designs in Fall 1925.<sup>25</sup> For Spring 1927, Mallinson gambled on its *American National Parks* series. This suite of twelve landscape designs, each available in from eight to twelve colorways on three different fabrications, surpassed in sales and critical response anything Mallinson had ever done, confounding those within the industry who thought the prints too big and too unusual to be fashionable.<sup>26</sup> [fig.8] It was followed by six designs for *Wonder Caves of America* for Fall 1927,



Fig.8 H.R. Mallinson & Co. *Blue Book of Silks de Luxe*, Spring/Summer 1927. National Parks Series, Front cover. Private Collection.

and then in Spring 1928

by the fifteen-design *American Indian* series. [fig.9] The company borrowed Native American artworks from the Brooklyn Museum to decorate the showroom for this opening, and this line too sold well. Then for Spring 1929 came the *Early American* series, for which the showroom was transformed into a Mississippi showboat. Music from Jerome Kern's *Showboat* filled the room, and upwards of two thousand people—buyers, manufacturers and fashion writers—attended. They saw another wide assortment of colors and styles, as within each series Mallinson provided designs ranging from avant-garde to conservative. [fig.10]



Fig.7 H.R. Mallinson & Co. Textile lengths, "Rhode Island Violets," 1915 (above) and "Indiana Carnation," 1929 (below). Courtesy of the Department of Textiles, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

<sup>25</sup> Mallinson was at the forefront of the movement to utilize American museum collections as design inspiration in the hope of encouraging an American aesthetic independent of European tastes. See Lauren D. Whitley, "Morris De Camp Crawford and the 'Designed in America' Campaign, 1916-1922," in *Creating Textiles: Makers, Methods, Markets* (Proceedings of the Sixth Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America, Inc., 1999), pp. 410-19.

<sup>26</sup> "Contrary to expectation, extreme novelties such as the Mallinson National Park series of prints have proven popular; and there is a feeling that the trade continues to await sensational novelties to keep up the 'thrills' fashion does not otherwise provide;" "Short Cuts in Buying, Selling and Delivering," in *The American Silk Journal*, vol. 46, no. 5 (May 1927), p. 36.

The twin afflictions of Rayon and Ready-to-Wear, in addition to the giant calamity of the Great Depression, had impaired the health of many silk manufacturers by 1930. Competition against the big rayon operations was fierce. The growing influence of the ready-to-wear garment industry and the American focus on mass-market production completely changed the relationship between fabric manufacturer and wholesale buyer. No longer did the Paris couture model apply, with dressmakers coming to the Mallinson showroom to be inspired by a particular weave or print novelty. Instead, garment manufacturers ordered fabrics based on the fashion forecasts from Paris, their own profit margins too small to encourage experimentation.<sup>27</sup>

This left little room for the small volume, high-end originator. In July 1930, Mallinson and his partners started the Original Fabrics Co. to address the insistent demands of the ready-to-wear market. Before this subsidiary had a chance to establish itself, however, Mallinson suffered a heart attack and died in the company headquarters in May 1931. E.I. Hanson became president, but could not chart a profitable course under the existing (and extremely adverse) conditions. The firm's products and publicity in the 1930s reflected new market realities. Ads often featured a ready-to-wear garment, listing the manufacturer's name and retail sources, undermining the primacy of the Mallinson name. The company tried to maintain its status among the top fabric manufacturers, registering its designs and continuing to make all-silk fabrics in addition to rayons and blends. However, some samples in the Smithsonian's collection show signs of heavy weighting, which suggests that while quality of design was still important, quality of cloth was, at least sometimes, sacrificed to the urgent need for profit.<sup>28</sup> The company,



Fig.9 H.R. Mallinson & Co. *American Indian* series. Dress, "Blackfoot Sun Dance" design. Courtesy of The Museum of Art, RISD. 2001.70.1

<sup>27</sup> Articles and addresses concerning the many and varied silk-industry ailments litter the pages of *The American Silk Journal*. For example, in the first six months of 1927 one finds: "Charles Cheney's Address to the Silk Club," describing the abuses of silk manufacturers by retailers (February, pp. 45-46, 68); Louis I. Nash's series entitled "Cooperative Effort to Dispel Trade Evils" (February, p. 47 ff.; March, p. 50 ff.; April, p. 47 ff.; May, p. 45 ff.; June, p. 39 ff.); "Trade Reports of Silk Conditions" with separate reports and many complaints by leading figures in each sector of the industry (April, p. 38 ff.); a reprint from another journal of an interview with Charles Cheney on labor issues, "Guess-work Cut From Mill Management" (May, p. 53 ff.); an editorial on "Rayon Versus Silk" (June, p. 33 ff.); and an unsigned article, "Overexpansion in Manufacturing" (June, p. 73 ff.).

<sup>28</sup> Descriptions of the Spring and Fall lines in both trade publications and fashion magazines indicate that pure-dye and all silk fabrics were a much smaller percentage of Mallinson's output in the 1930s than previously. Mallinson did participate in the September 1935 "Silk Parade" promotional campaign, a spin-off of the old Mallinson "Silk Week" campaigns. It boasted over 7500 retail-store participants and used all the old Mallinson merchandising schemes: posters for point of sale, booklets for sales staff, advertising and display layout suggestions, the distribution of "Silk Merchandise News" with advice on latest fashions, prizes given for the best window displays. "True Fabric Identification First Aim of Silk Parade," in *The American Silk & Rayon Journal*, vol. 54, no. 10 (October 1935), pp. 23-24.

which suffered losses every year from 1929, lived on its reserve from prior profits until 1936, when it filed for bankruptcy protection and reorganization and began to break up. The renamed Mallinson Fabrics Corporation, divested of mills, became a print converter in 1937 and was finally subsumed into the voracious postwar maw of Burlington Industries in 1955.

Hiram Royal Mallinson was not a weaver, dyer, or designer. His background was not in the ancient art of silk production, but in the twentieth-century art of marketing. The decades of success that attended his efforts to stand with the European makers of luxury silks testify to his skill in uniting a quality product with determined advertising.

The final defeat of the company that bore his name reflects multiple issues at work within the silk industry: the cost and availability of labor and raw materials, competition against new fibers, over-production and price-cutting, design piracy, loss of creative control to the garment industry, and ever-shrinking profit margins. It will take the work of many scholars to sort through this mass of tangled threads and write the full history of the American silk road.

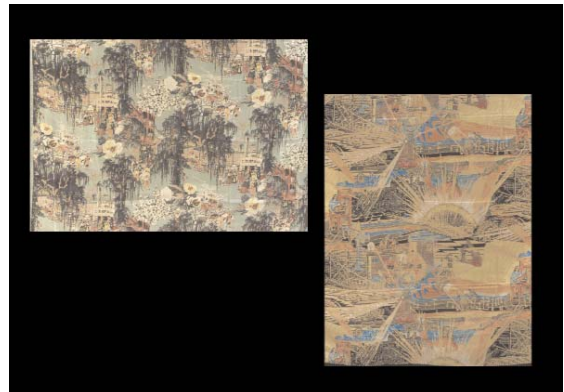


Fig.10 H.R. Mallinson & Co. Textile lengths, *Early American Series*. "A Showboat on the Mississippi" (L) and "Franklin's Key to Electricity" (R). Courtesy of The Museum of Art, RISD. 57.083.100f, 57.083.100d

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