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From Court to Convent: A Silk Embroidered Sampler from Colonial Mexico

by
Bobbie Sumberg

Silk appears frequently in many Mexican textiles and garments such as rebozos, skirts, and huipils or blouses. In this paper I discuss a different tradition, that of sampler embroidery in the urban style.

Yrene Escandon was reported to be a lady in waiting for Empress Carlotta, who reigned in Mexico with her husband Emperor Maximilien from 1863-1867. During this time and before entering a convent after her service she and some friends embroidered a sampler replete with floral, religious, animal, and bird motifs. Using this remarkable piece in the collection of the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe I will present a brief history of samplers in Mexico. I will then discuss the use of motifs in this piece and where they originated, and the sampler's style as it relates to indigenous and colonial influences.