

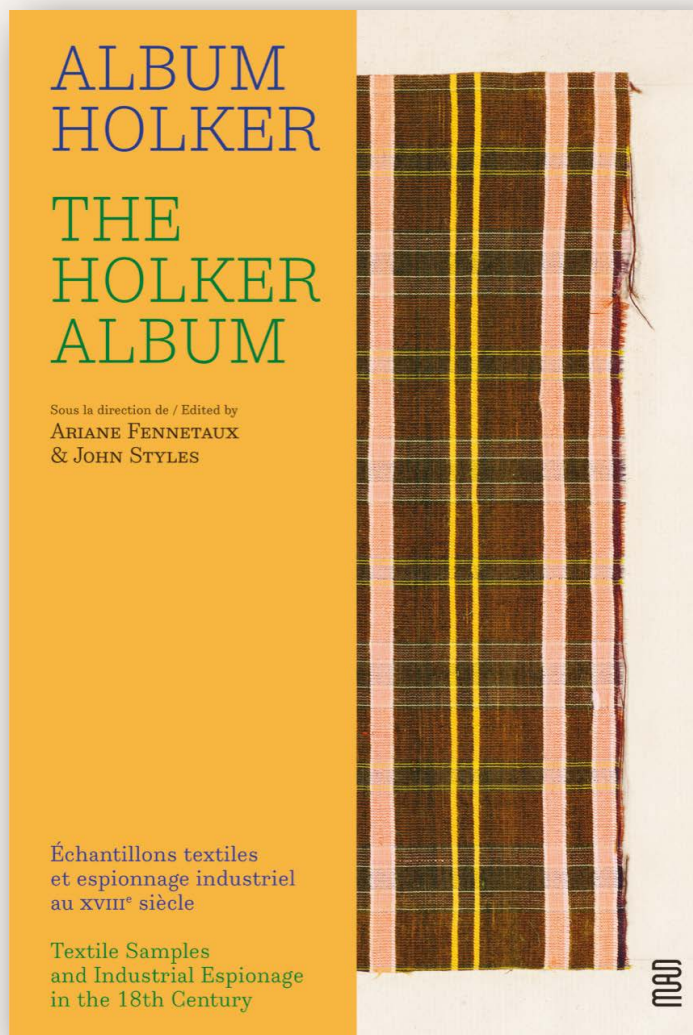
Publication

The Holker Album

Textile Samples
and Industrial Espionage
in the 18th Century

Press release

February 2023



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The Holker Album

Textile Samples and Industrial Espionage in the 18th Century

Edited by
Ariane Fennetaux
and John Styles

Éditions des Arts Décoratifs announces the publication of a facsimile edition of the Holker Album, a unique album of textile samples. In 1751, John Holker (1719-1786), an English textile manufacturer exiled in France, undertook a perilous industrial espionage mission to England to collect samples of English textiles on behalf of the French king, Louis XV. On his return, the samples were assembled in a manuscript volume, which is now preserved at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris.



1. A page from the Holker album showing chintz samples — Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs © Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance

2. A portrait of John Holker — Anonymous c.1775 Mézidon-Canon, Château de Canon © Victoire Le Tarnec

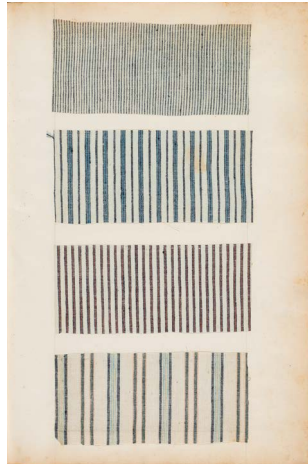


2.

John Holker started out as a modest textile calenderer at Manchester. The success he was to achieve as key figure in the French textile industry was not predestined. A Catholic and supporter of the deposed Stuart dynasty, in 1745 he joined the unsuccessful Jacobite rebellion against the Hanoverian monarchy in Britain. Captured, imprisoned and facing a charge of treason, he escaped to France. There he joined a Scottish infantry regiment in the French army, consisting of Jacobite exiles.

In 1751, Holker returned to England, though still a wanted man. His secret mission was to recruit craftsmen skilled in English textile manufacturing techniques and bring back tools and fabric samples. In recognition of the mission's success, the French state gave him financial support to start manufacturing cotton textiles at Rouen using English technology. In 1755, he was appointed Inspector General of Manufactures, responsible for improving the textile industries throughout France.

1.



3.

3. A page from the Holker album showing fabrics used in the slave trade — Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance



4.

4. Double page from the Holker album showing samples of jean fabric (the two samples at the bottom) — Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance

The book

Each sample in the Holker album is accompanied by a handwritten technical description specifying the quality of the fabric, its price, its dimensions and the manufacturing processes. The album is famous for preserving the oldest identifiable samples of jean fabric, but has rarely been seen by the public. Completely bilingual, the book includes a facsimile reproduction of the album, accompanied by a transcription of its handwritten text and a dozen essays by experts. The essays, written by academics, curators and specialists from France, Britain and North America, explore the album from various angles: the globalization of commerce, the slave trade, industrial espionage, economic rivalry between France and England, the taste for cotton and its role in the history of fashion, etc. The book demonstrates the importance of centuries-old links between France and the United Kingdom and is an indispensable work of reference for the history of textiles.

Specifications

272 pages, including 110 color facsimile pages
170 color illustrations
Bilingual French-English
Special format: 25 × 37 cm
Hardcover
Sale price: € 49
Éditions des Arts Décoratifs
Distribution in France and Belgium: BLDD, available in November 2022
Distribution in the rest of the world: ACC Art Books, available in February 2023

Contributors

Denis Bruna, Head Curator at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, in charge of textile and dress collections prior to 1800
Serge Chassagne, Emeritus Professor in History at the Université Lumière Lyon 2
Ariane Fennetaux, Assistant Professor in history, Université Paris Cité
Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros, Head Curator at the Palais Galliera in charge of 18th-century dress collections and dolls, Research and teaching fellow at Sorbonne Université
Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, Professor in History at Université Paris Cité,
Beverly Lemire, Professor & Henry Marshall Tory Chair, University of Alberta
Philippe Minard, Professor in History at Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis, Director of research at EHESS.
Giorgio Riello, Professor of Early Modern Global History at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy
John Styles, Professor Emeritus in History at the University of Hertfordshire, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Victoria and Albert Museum
Philip A. Sykas, Reader in Textile History at the Manchester Metropolitan

Events

Talk

→ 24 November 2022
→ Auditorium of Musée des Arts Décoratifs
→ With Ariane Fennetaux and John Styles
→ This event is free but registration is necessary
→ Register on madparis.fr

Useful information

— Press contacts

Isabelle Mendoza
Anne-Solène Delfolie
+ 33 (0) 1 44 55 58 78
presse@madparis.fr

— Publications and images

Chloé Demey, Head of Department
107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 68

— Les Arts Décoratifs

Johannes Huth, President
Sylvie Corréard, Chief executive officer
Christine Macel, Director of Museums
Yvon Figueras, Director of international development and production
Olivier Hassler, Director of Communication

— Musée des Arts décoratifs

Christine Macel, Director of Museum
107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 50
Métro: Palais-Royal, Pyramides, Tuileries

Hours

Permanent collections:
→ Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am–6 pm
Temporary exhibitions:
→ Tuesday and Wednesday, 11 am–6 pm
→ Open late on Thursdays until 9 pm

Admission

→ General admission: € 14
→ Concession: € 10
→ Free for under 26

— Musée Nissim de Camondo

Christine Macel, Director of Museum
63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris
+33 (0) 1 53 89 06 40
Open 10 am–5:30 pm
Closed Monday and Tuesday
→ General admission: € 12
→ Concession: € 9
→ Free for under 26

— Library

111 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 36
Open Monday 1 pm–6 pm
and Tuesday to Friday 10 am–6 pm

— Visitor engagement

Isabelle Grassart, Head of Department
→ **Activities for individuals**
Reservation via the online ticketing
→ **Activities for groups**
Information and reservations
→ Young public, families, schools:
jeune@madparis.fr / 01 44 55 59 26
→ Adult public, higher education, social field & disability:
adac@madparis.fr / 01 44 55 59 25
→ **Conferences, round tables and colloquiums**
Information and reservations:
01 44 55 59 75

— École Camondo

266 Boulevard Raspail, 75014 Paris
+33 (0) 1 43 35 44 28

— Ateliers du Carrousel

Fulvia Di Pietrantonio, Director
107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris
266 boulevard Raspail, 75014 Paris
63 rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris
+33 (0) 1 44 55 59 02

— Bookshop & Gift Store

105 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris
+33 (0) 1 42 60 64 94
Open 11 am–18:30 pm
Open late on Thursdays until 9 pm
Closed Monday

— Loulou Restaurant

107 rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris
or access via the Carrousel gardens
Open daily 12 pm–2 am
+33 (0) 1 42 60 41 96

— Le Camondo Restaurant

61 bis rue de Monceau, 75008 Paris
Open Tuesday to Saturday from noon to midnight and Sunday during the day
+33 (0) 1 45 63 40 40

— Internet and social media

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