

Selections from

A Particular Beauty: Romanian Folk Clothing

from the Collection
of Maryhill Museum of Art



Romanian Folk Clothing at Maryhill Museum of Art

Romanian folk arts have had a home at Maryhill Museum of Art since the institution's inception. Queen Marie of Romania (1875–1938) is credited with being one of the museum's Four Founders. As Romanian crown princess (1893–1914), she began wearing the folk dress that served as Romanian national court costume. Her interest in these garments had begun after her engagement to Crown Prince Ferdinand (1865–1927) and it grew following her arrival in Romania. She then began wearing peasant-inspired clothing from some of the country's rural southern provinces.

These fashion choices continued a trend that had started with her predecessor, Elisabeth, Queen of Romania (1843–1916). During her reign, Elisabeth often wore ethnic attire from Romania's Muscel and Argeş regions. Women at court adopted similar garb, as did Marie and many in her circle. The finely embroidered garments worn at court and by upper-class individuals were initially influenced by vernacular aesthetics and earlier Byzantine textiles. As styles evolved, Romanian folk garments became visible symbols of national identity and important economic exports—especially after World War I.

In 1914, Sam Hill began building a home on his south-central Washington State ranch. The following year, while visiting San Francisco, socialite Alma de Bretteville Spreckels (1881–1968) introduced him to dancer Loïe Fuller (1862–1928). During World War I, the three actively raised relief funds for France and Belgium. In 1916, their largesse extended to Romania—after it had joined the Allied cause. In 1917—the same year that Fuller convinced Hill to turn his unfinished ranch home into an art museum—Fuller founded the American National Committee for Romanian Relief and recruited Hill to serve as its vice president.

After the Great War ended, Queen Marie made an unofficial trip to the Paris Peace Conference. She traveled there during the spring of 1919 to encourage France, Great Britain, and the United States to honor the promises they had made when urging Romania to join the Allied cause against the Central Powers. Her efforts ultimately resulted in the creation of Greater Romania—a political entity that added Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania to the existing Kingdom of Romania and roughly coincided with the placement of Romanian-speaking people in southeastern Europe.

Queen Marie was a long-time friend of Loïe Fuller. During the queen's stay in Paris, Fuller brought Hill—who was in Europe visiting his friend, King Albert of Belgium—to meet her. During their meeting, Hill pledged his eternal friendship to the sovereign. Shortly after her return to Bucharest, she requested that he visit her there. After returning home, Hill and Queen Marie maintained a correspondence and in 1926 she came to North America to dedicate the as-yet-unfinished Maryhill Museum of Art. Addressing the crowds at the dedication ceremony, she acknowledged the building's vacant state but looked beyond it, saying there was “a dream built into this place” and that “the things dreamers do seem incomprehensible to others.”

During her 1926 visit, Queen Marie gave the museum more than 70 objects. These included personal items, Romanian folk pottery, Russian icons, and diverse textiles—objects she described as “simple gifts, made by simple hands; embroideries and handiwork in wood and metals.” That same year, Queen Marie’s eldest daughter, Elisabetha, the former Queen Consort of Greece, gave the museum a collection of terracotta Tanagra figures, a half-dozen ancient Greek amphorae, and other ceramics. A year earlier, the museum had received its very first donation—three silver filigree objects—from Marie’s second daughter, Marie (Mignon), Queen Consort of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

Many of the museum’s other Romanian objects were acquired from Queen Marie by Alma Spreckels. The women first met in 1922, when Spreckels and Fuller visited Peleşor Castle in Sinaia, Romania. Spreckels told Queen Marie about her plans for creating San Francisco’s California Palace of the Legion of Honor as a memorial to the California soldiers who had died during World War I. She then purchased for the museum a quantity of gold-colored furniture like that used in the castle’s “Golden Room.” Six months later, Queen Marie promised to donate a collection of royal mementos, including a replica of the crown she had worn at her 1922 coronation. The California Palace of the Legion of Honor ultimately elected not to create a Romanian Room or accept the donation of the gold furniture. Spreckels tried to sell it to Hill and—after his death—she loaned, then gave it to Maryhill Museum of Art.

Since 1926, Maryhill Museum’s collection of Romanian folk art—the work of “simple hands”—has continued to grow. Significant additions to this collection have been made by Charles Whyte (1977), Irene Bie (1980), Dorothy Norris Harkness (1980), the Iuliu Maniu American-Romanian Relief Foundation (2000), Loyola Doyle Coniglio and Patricia Margaret Doyle (2010), Marielle Bancou-Segal (2011), Irina Walker (2011), Monica Carter (2013), Frank Ford (2014), Louise Gherasim (2014), Joel and Susan Marrant (2015), Kiki Skagen Munshi (2015), and Ronald Wixman (2018).

More than 90 years after Queen Marie’s initial donation, Maryhill Museum of Art’s Romanian folk textile collection numbers more than 450 items. This important aspect of the museum’s identity was featured prominently in the 2001 *Uncommon Threads: Textiles from the Permanent Collection* exhibit, and it was the sole focus of *A People’s Legacy: Romanian Folk Life through Dress, Textiles and Art* in 2006. *A Particular Beauty: Romanian Folk Clothing* (2020) continues that tradition.

The textile captions here contain information provided by Simona Lau, who is co-curator of the exhibition.

Steven L. Grafe, Ph.D.
Curator of Art



Princess Irene of Greece, Queen Marie of Romania, Princess of Helen of Greece, and Queen Marie of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, 1923; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.20.4

Princess Irene of Greece and Denmark (1904–1974) was the fifth child of King Constantine I of the Hellenes and Sophia of Prussia, his queen consort. She and her sister were both granddaughters of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom. Through her marriage to Prince Aimone, Duke of Aosta, Irene was Queen Consort of the Independent State of Croatia from 1941–1943, although she never lived there.

Princess Helen of Greece and Denmark (1896–1982) was the third child of King Constantine I and Sophia of Prussia. She was married to King Carol II of Romania from 1921–1928 (and when this photo was taken). Helen was the mother of King Michael I and was Queen Mother of Romania during his reign (1940–1947).

Queen Marie of Yugoslavia was Queen Marie of Romania's third child and second daughter. Although her given name was Marie, she was known as Mignon to distinguish her from her mother. Between 1922 and 1929, Mignon was Queen Consort of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. She was Queen Consort of Yugoslavia from 1929–1934.

The younger women are where wearing *sumane* (winter coats). Queen Marie of Romania's two-part metal buckle (*paftal*) is of a type that was once common throughout the Balkans. They were worn by the Romanian aristocracy and peasant population alike and have adorned the outfits of both men and women since the Middle Ages.



Unidentified photographer (Romanian, active early 20th century), *My Dahlia Garden in Bran*, c. 1925; Gift of Queen Marie of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3

Bran Castle is located about 110 miles northwest of Bucharest, in Braşov County. The castle became a royal residence in 1920, when the Kingdom of Romania gained control of Transylvania. It then became one of Queen Marie's favorite homes and she had extensive renovations undertaken there.

The castle was inherited by Princess Ileana (1909–1991), who used it as a hospital during World War II. It was seized by the communist regime in 1948 but was eventually returned to Princess Ileana's descendants. The castle is now a museum displaying art and furniture collected by Queen Marie.



Left: Foto Julietta (Romanian, active early 20th century), **A.A.L.L.R.R. Principesa Maria, Prințesa Maria și Prințul Nicolae**, 1908; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.20.3

This image is from a postcard series titled *Princess Marie with Princes and Princesses in Peleş Forest*. It was published in 1908 by C. Sfetea, Bucharest. Peleş Forest and Peleş Castle are located about 80 miles northwest of Bucharest.

Right: Unidentified photographer (Romanian, active early 20th century), **Near the Old Stone Cross at Scroviște**, c. 1925; Gift of Queen Marie of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3

Queen Marie appears here in Romanian folk attire in a photo taken adjacent to Lake Snagov. The location is about 25 miles north of Bucharest, near Scroviște, the royal hunting lodge.



Left: Unidentified photographer (Romanian, active early 20th century), *A.S.R. Prințesa Elisaveta*, c. 1910; Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1951.7

Princess Elisabetha of Romania (1894–1956) was the second child and first daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie. She is here wearing an ensemble from Mehedinți in southwest Oltenia. Elisabetha married Crown Prince George of Greece in 1921 and became Queen Consort when he ascended to the throne in 1922. King George went into exile in 1923 and was deposed in 1924. The couple began their exile in Romania and he ultimately relocated to the UK. King George was restored to the Greek throne in 1935 but Elisabetha remained in Romania and the couple divorced that same year.



Right: M. Norvak (Romanian, active early 20th century), *Woman in Oltenia Attire*, c. 1910; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.15.3

This woman was photographed in a Bucharest photo studio, but her clothing is from the Oltenia region. Bucharest lies within the historic Muntenia region; Oltenia is west of there.



Gorj Region (southwest Romania), **Man's Winter Coat** (recto and verso), first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.19.21

The decoration on this man's coat (*suman*) was inspired by Dinca Schileru (1846–1919), a politician who influenced regional fashion. In Gorj, coats like this one were the most valuable part of male peasant attire and they eventually became symbolic of Oltenia's creativity.

Snail, snake, spear, and frog snout motifs are all visible here. The lack of a collar and profuse decoration suggest that this coat belonged to an affluent individual who wore urban suits with tall collars and cravats underneath it. The choice of a peasant-inspired *suman* allowed him to show his national, patriotic spirit.



Bucovina Region (northern Romania), **Unisex Winter Coat**, c. 1960; Gift of the Ron Wixman/Steve Glaser Collection, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2018.34.32

This style of winter coat (*cojoc*) is from southern Bucovina and it is worn by both men and women. The coats are made from sheepskin and decorated with embroidered floral motifs. Small glass beads are sometimes added to the decoration.



Oltenia Region (southwest Romania), **Woman's Winter Coat** (recto and verso), first quarter of the 20th century; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art

This winter coat (*suman*) is decorated with black *barnas* (thread) and silk cord (*gaietane*) in the "Schilaresc Style." Originally inspired by the Ottoman Baroque, the Schilaresc *sumane* were the work of Oltenia's master *suman* makers. The style's name was taken from Gorj politician, Dinca Schileru, who improved and popularized the style. During the first quarter of the 20th century, members of the Romanian royal family were photographed wearing coats like this and *sumane* became very popular. They were usually produced in monastic textile ateliers where nuns made the fabric and cut and decorated the coats. The Schilaresc-style *suman* that Queen Marie wore during her coronation was made by the nuns of Agapia Monastery in Neamț County, Romania.



Left: Pitești, Argeș County (Muntenia), **Man's Vest**, 1948; Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.19.16

Right: Bosca Montana, Caraș-Severin County (Banat), **Man's Vest**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.19.25



Ciacova, Timiș County (Banat), **Man's Vest** (recto and verso), first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of Mrs. Irene Bie, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1980.1.2

This man's vest (*chinus*) is made from heavy wool fabric (*aba*) and ornamented in geometric patterns with black, blue, green, red, and yellow braided wool cord (*sinoare*).



Buziaș, Timiș County (Banat), **Man's Vest** (recto and verso), first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.19.26

A man's vest (*chinus*) like this one is made from heavy wool fabric called *aba*. It is ornamented with colored *sinoare* (braided wool cord) that forms geometric patterns, often incorporating the colors seen in Romania's tricolored flag. These were generally worn with a white shirt and pants and added color and exuberance to the outfit.



Uzdin, Banat Region (eastern Serbia), **Woman's Vest** (recto and verso), early 20th century; Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.19.2



Crișul Alb, Arad County (western Romania), **Woman's Vest** (recto and verso), mid-20th century; Gift of the Ron Wixman/Steve Glaser Collection, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2018.34.4d

Wool and leather vests were important and prestigious parts of the male and female celebratory outfits. Vests often constituted the most expensive parts of wedding outfits since they were made only by masters who were part of zonal guilds and who had exclusive sales rights.



The coats shown previously come from the counties (*județe*) and geographic regions outlined on this map. During the Middle Ages, Bucovina was part of Moldova. The region was annexed by the Austrian (later Austro-Hungarian) Empire in 1775, as a reward for Habsburg support of Russia during the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774. Romania regained control of the region after World War I, but Bucovina’s northern half was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. That area is now part of Ukraine.



The places of origin for these vests are shown here. When national borders were redrawn following World War II, part of the Banat region was assigned to present-day Serbia. The area is now known as the Vojvodina and it is home to many Romanian communities. Uzdin is in Serbian Banat, approximately 30 miles southwest of the Romania-Serbia border. The town has a population that is about three-quarters Romanian and it is a center for Romanian cultural activity in Serbia.



Left: Unidentified photographer (active late 19th century), **Couple from Uzdin, Banat,** 1893; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2020.1.1

Right: Unidentified photographer (active late 19th century), **Couple from Vâlcea or Oltenia,** 1893; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2019.25.4

These photographs originally appeared in *Les 32 Mariages Roumains* by Jules Brun, which was published in Paris in 1893. The booklet commemorated a mass wedding of 32 couples from around Romania in the Orthodox cathedral in Bucharest. Elisabeth (of Wied), Queen of Romania, orchestrated the event to celebrate the 1893 wedding of Princess Marie and Crown Prince Ferdinand. In *The Story of My Life*, Queen Marie wrote:

[Crown Prince Ferdinand] and I were to be sponsors at the marriage of thirty-two peasant couples, chosen from the thirty-two Roumanian districts.... This colourful thirty-two-fold wedding was celebrated at [Bucharest's Romanian Orthodox Patriarchal Cathedral] and was indeed a pretty sight owing to the bright peasant dresses and the many lighted tapers against the dim, frescoed background of the old church. It was a picture my eyes took possession of with deep pleasure.... [It was] an attractive sight indeed, in which I discovered some of the romance I had thought to find in this far land.



Left: Unidentified photographer (Romanian, active early 20th century), *Romanian Girl in National Costume*, c. 1920; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.15.1

Right: Unidentified photographer (Romanian, active early 20th century), *Young Woman in Romanian Dress*, 1915; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.1.2

The photo portrait of the young woman on the right was taken in June 1915. An inscription on the back of the original postcard reveals that the image was sent to the subject's brother on the occasion of her 16th birthday.

The sumptuous outfit that she is wearing comes from Prahova, a county in the historic region of Muntenia, north of Bucharest. The embroidery technique used at the neck of her garment is called *ciupag*. The technique had its origins in Transylvania, but it is now a zonal marker for Prahova.



Left: Romania, Chemise, c. 1920; Gift of Marie, Queen of Romania, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1926.3

This chemise was a 1926 gift from Queen Marie to Maryhill Museum of Art and it was the first Romanian textile in the museum collection. The garment was created with an urban, contemporary appearance—and in a 1920s dress style. The embroidery was applied by hand.

Right: Teleorman County (southern Romania), Chemise, Wrap-Around Skirt, and Sash, late 19th century; Donated by Irina, Princess of Roumania, Great-Granddaughter to Queen Marie, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2011.29.1–3

The woman's ensemble on the right is from Teleorman County, Muntenia. It includes a linen chemise that is embroidered with silk and gold metallic thread, a wool wrap-around skirt (*valnic*), a woven wool sash, and a silk woven head-veil (*borangic maramă*). The chemise's cherry-red embroidery, tall collar, and overall cut is specific to the Vlașca of the Teleorman region. It is paired here with a Romanați red *valnic*.

These garments were many decades old when they were given to Princess Irina by Lady Joana Gordon (in about 1995). Lady Joana was the godmother to Princess Irina's children. She was born Baroness Ioana Alexandra Bujoiu and her father, Ion Bujoiu, had been a minister in King Michael I's cabinet. He became a political prisoner of the Communist regime in 1948.



Left: Muscel Region (Muntenia), **Chemise, Wrap-Around Skirt, and Sash**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of Loyola Doyle Coniglio and Patricia Margaret Doyle and Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2010.17. 4b–c and 2000.19.1c

Right: Hoffman Studios (American, active early 20th century), **Mary Louise Mandrea and Friend in Romanian Dress**, c. 1925; Gift of Loyola Doyle Coniglio and Patricia Margaret Doyle, 2010.17.55

The outfit at left belonged to the donors' mother, Mary Louise Mandrea (1909–2008), whose parents emigrated to the United States from southern Romania at the turn of the twentieth century. The vintage photograph shows Mary Louise as a young woman, wearing the same clothing.

Mary Louise's parents were both from the village of Sâmbăta de Jos in Braşov County, Transylvania. They knew each other as children and met again in Ohio after immigrating to the United States in 1904 and 1905. They married in 1907, and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, before settling in Detroit, Michigan, at the beginning of World War I. The Mandreas were joined in Detroit by various family members and friends. The couple and their two children—including Mary Louise—were subsequently active in local Romanian cultural activities.



Muntenia Region (south-central Romania), **Woman's Chemise**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.19.20a

This delicate, urban chemise is made of imported marquisette (*marchizet*)—a special cotton or silk gauze popular during the first half of the 20th century—and embroidered with silk and metallic thread. This type of delicate work was created by numerous national costume ateliers that were prevalent in the Muscel, Prahova, and Craiova areas during the period between the two World Wars.



Oltenia Region (southwest Romania), **Woman's Chemise**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of Angela Jonescu, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1973.4.1a

This urban shirt with *platca* (the type of cut and design on the shoulders) is embroidered with silk and metallic thread. It is probably the work of a national costume atelier from Craiova, Oltenia (Dolj County).



Left: Pădureni, Hunedoara County (Transylvania), **Woman's Chemise**, first half of the 20th century; Gift of E. Linda Wenning, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2011.23.1

This chemise was made for a young woman—possibly a bride—and most of the embroidery is red cotton floss on home-woven cotton fabric. The needlework on an average Pădureni shirt like this displays about 20 different stitching techniques, including the home-made lace (*cipca*) on the sleeves and skirt (*poală*). Metal sequins and glass beads were often used as well.

Right: Bucovina (northern Romania), **Woman's Shirt**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of Kiki Skagen Munshi, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.12.6

The best-known type of Bucovina shirt is made of linen, hemp, cotton, or a combination of the same. Every design and execution detail—from the type of stitch to the color and materials used—reveals important social codes and mores of the wearers and her world. These include *brezarau* (the gathering of the shirt around the neck) and tripartite sleeves divided by *altita* (upper sleeve); *incret* (a type of embroidery that originally gathered the width of the fabric); and *rauri* (rivers or branches), which is the embroidery that appears on the rest of the sleeve. Historically, the three zones were embroidered with ancient signs representing different aspects of the wearer's spiritual life, with *altita* describing the heavens (where one may see stars, swirls of wind, birds, solar symbols), *incret* defining the earth (where symbols of fertility appear) and *raurile*, which define the life and family of the wearer.



Left: Bucovina (northern Romania), **Woman's Shirt**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of Kiki Skagen Munshi, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.12.7

This ceremonial shirt has the traditional three sections embroidered onto each sleeve. Each segment represents an aspect of the wearers' spiritual life: *altita* (the heavens); *incret* (the earth); and *raurile*, (rivers or branches; the life and family of the wearer).

Right: Bucovina (northern Romania), **Woman's Wedding Shirt**, last quarter of the 19th century; Gift of Dorothy Morris Harkness, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1980.5.5

This is a typical example of a historic bridal shirt from Bucovina, with embroidered *brezarau*, *altita*, *incret*, and *rauri* at the neck and on the sleeves. Over time, this style of shirt evolved to have larger *altita* and *incret*, and bigger, bolder embroidery. When this garment was made, the average bride was 15 years old.



Romania, **Woman's Shirt**, first quarter of the 20th century; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, FIC.2019.16

The shirt is an example of post-World War I national costume. It shows design elements such as *brezarau* (gathering of the shirt around the neck) that are typical of Bucovina and Oltenia, as well as sleeve designs inspired by shirts from Gorj.



Left and Right: Unidentified photographer (Romanian, active mid-20th century), *Women in Romanian Attire*, c. 1930; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2015.15.3–4

At left, these women appear in clothing from the Oltenia region. Their garments may, however, have belonged to the photography studio. At right they are shown in the same studio wearing clothing from Sibiu, which is located to the north in Transylvania.

The southern boundary of the Oltenia region is the Danube River. The area is characterized by very elaborate regional clothing that—together with Argeş and Muscel—defined Romania’s quintessential national costume. The Danube was and is a major European transportation route linking Asia and Western Europe. Its banks have been inhabited by many different peoples, including Thracians, Greeks, Romans, Slavs, Turks, Celts, and Germanic communities, all of whom left stylistic traces in the DNA of regional attire.

The black and white Sibiu outfits were inspired by the Sălişte clothing that had its roots in Mărginimea Sibiului regional costume. Mărginimea Sibiului is an area comprised of 18 Romanian locales in southwestern Sibiu County—all of which have unique cultural historical lineages. Much admired for their vivid black and white contrast, Sălişte costumes completely replaced local attire in many regions of Transylvania.



Unidentified photographer (Romanian, active mid-20th century), ***School Group in National Dress***, 1937; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2019.25.2

This group photo was taken shortly before World War II. A portrait of King Carol II, who reigned from 1930–1940, appears on the wall at upper right.

Memories of medieval times and the first Wallachian royal court at Argeş prompted Romanian noblewomen such as Elena Cornescu and Felicia Racovita—who had properties in the Muscel and Argeş regions—to produce Romania’s first national costume. After joining the boyar women in her court in their effort to make and promote the national costume, Queen Consort Elizabeth of Romania elevated the clothing and it became royal court attire in the 1870s. This partnership between the queen and Romanian noblewomen further boosted the Romanian identity renaissance.

Marauding Ottoman and Tartar groups crossed the Danube and pillaged Wallachian villages for centuries, but Muscel was protected by mountains and it was able to establish important trade markets with Transylvania. Romania’s first textile ateliers—making fabric, rugs, shirts, wraps, and headwraps—were in this region and they ultimately promoted the creation of the Romanian national costume.



Breaza, Prahova County (south-central Romania), **Women's Shirts**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of Dorothy Morris Harkness, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1980.5.2 and FIC.2019.3

The village of Breaza is in the historic region of Muntenia (formerly Wallachia). It became famous for making women's shirts that were created in "work at home" ateliers and the garments became synonymous with the Romanian national costume. These workshops were established during the second half of the 19th century by boyar women (high-ranking aristocrats) who were Wallachian patriots. The studios offered work, materials, and instruction to the peasant population. The completed embroidery was sold throughout Romania and in international markets as far away as the United States.

Breaza shirts are characterized by various motifs—the Breaza tulip, crown of the rooster, Queen Marie's star—that were embroidered with white, red, blue, or black silk onto light fabric, with narrow, symbolic *incret* and gathered necklines.



Prahova County (south-central Romania), **Woman's Shirt**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of the Iuliu Maniu Foundation, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 2000.19.1a

This orange-striped fabric is embroidered with what some would deem a typical Romanian palette: black and gold. These colors were made popular by Elena C. Cornescu's 1906 *Romanian Embroidery (Cusături Românești)* album.



Breaza, Prahova County (south-central Romania), **Women's Shirts**, first quarter of the 20th century; Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, FIC.2019.8 and 15

The Breaza region's mountainous terrain limited agricultural activity to just a few crops. Women from Breaza and the surrounding region earned their livings by making fabric, rugs, shirts, and wraps and by selling them to local markets. It is estimated that in its heyday—during the first quarter of the 20th century—Breaza employed all the women in the village and in all surrounding communities as well. The tradition of making Breaza shirts was so important that it continued during the communist era, but the methods and quality of work were quite different from what had been produced during the first decades of the 20th century.

Many significant ateliers in Breaza and its environs were adept at creating garments with *ciupag* (embroidery over the gathered fabric at the neckline). This technique was originally imported from Transylvania.



Breaza, Prahova County (south-central Romania), **Women's Shirts**, first quarter of the 20th century; Gift of Dorothy Morris Harkness and Gift of Kiki Skagen Munshi, Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, 1980.5.7 and 2015.12.3



This map shows the counties and geographic regions from which the chemises in this exhibition come.

Wallachia is a historic and geographic region that was traditionally divided into two sections: Muntenia (Greater Wallachia) and Oltenia (Lesser Wallachia). It was founded as a principality in the early 14th century. In 1417, Wallachia became a tribute state of the Ottoman Empire, and this arrangement generally lasted until the 19th century. In 1859, Wallachia and Moldova formed the United Principalities. The alliance adopted the name “Romania” in 1866 and became the Kingdom of Romania in 1881.



The areas from which the preceding women’s shirts and blouses came are shown on this map. Breaza is located near the western boundary of Prahova County, in the northwest region of that *județ*.

Further Reading

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