Fringe Elements

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Recommended Citation
Hume, Sara, "Fringe Elements" (2017). Kent State University Museum. 7.
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Fringe Elements

From leather strips to silken tassels, fringe takes an array of different forms. Fringe is one of the most basic forms of ornamentation on textiles since it is a natural finish for weaving. When threads of the warp extend beyond the last weft threads they create a fringe. While originally an integral part of the textile, most fringe is now applied separately to the garment. The beauty of fringe often derives from its motion. The loose threads swing and sway at the slightest movement. Although the pieces on exhibit are still, the drama and energy of fringe remains apparent.

This exhibition assembles examples of fringe on costumes and textiles from around the world. While the uses of fringe are remarkably diverse, there are certain categories that emerge across national and cultural boundaries. Leather fringe can be found on Native American dress, Spanish equestrian wear and also suits from the 1960s counterculture. Long silken fringe adorned dresses from the Jazz Age, shawls exported from China and ornate costumes from the Victorian period. This exhibition highlights both the great diversity in fringe but also the surprising links between seemingly disparate cultures.

Sara Hume, PhD
Curator
Self fringe

Originally fringe served as a natural extension of a textile or piece of leather. For leather garments the fringe formed a natural barrier to water, acting like a wick.

1. Ensemble with printed pattern
  Givenchy
  French, ca. 1968-70
  Printed silk

  Givenchy evokes animal skin in this ensemble not only through the printed pattern but also by the self-fringe.

  Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.506 a-c

2. Purple suede vest and pants
  English, 1960s
  Suede

  From the collection of and in memory of James Melvin Someroski, KSUM 1997.6.64

3. Brown leather chaps
  Probably Spanish, early 20th century
  Leather

  Chaps of this type, known as zahones, are traditionally worn by picadors in Spanish bull fights.

  Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.900

4. Woman’s leather dress with heavy beading
  Plains Indian probably Sioux, late 19th century
  Leather, glass beads

  The extensive glass beadwork indicates that this dress was worn for ceremonies and on special occasions.

  Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.894
Integral to the textile

For woven textiles, fringe occurs naturally as the extension of the warp threads beyond the last weft threads. Similarly, macramé garments can finish with fringe that is the extension of the knotted fibers.

5. Dress of ivory silk fringe
American, late 1930s
Ivory silk fringe, silk crepe
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.379

6. Braided shawl
Colombian, 1960-76
Knotted and braided strips of cotton or rayon
Gift of Vilma Monserrat Smith, KSUM 1993.2.2

7. Woven dress that extends into fringe
Proenza Schouler
American, Spring 2015
68% viscose, 23% hemp, 9% linen
Purchased from acquisition fund, KSUM 2016.16.1

Long and silky

Fringe can reach exceptional lengths and serve as the focal part of an outfit.
8. Silk taffeta shawl with multicolored embroidery
Chinese for export, 1900-25
Silk taffeta, silk embroidery, silk fringe
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.1972

9. Sheer dress with fringe and embroidery
Probably American, 1920s
Silk chiffon, silk fringe
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1987.41.71

10. Black silk shawl with ombré fringe
Spanish, ca. 1920s
Silk
Popescu-Judetz Collection, KSUM 1991.30.3

11. Black crepe evening jumpsuit
American, 1968-69
Crepe, synthetic fringe
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Rowley, KSUM 1985.12.1

12. Evening cape of brocaded silk
American, ca. 1925
Silk brocade, silk fringe
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.380

13. Cream silk embroidered parasol
Chinese for American market, ca. 1900
Cream silk, ivory handle
Gift of Colin Lawton Johnson, KSUM 2002.35.11

14. Pink and white silk taffeta evening dress
American, ca. 1855-60
White silk taffeta, pink silk ribbon, lace, silk fringe
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.83 a-c

White fringe

The popularity of silk fringe continued through the nineteenth century into the early nineteenth century.
Red fringe

In some cultures, red fringe has particular symbolic meaning. In others, it simply holds a powerful visual appeal.

15. Striped apron with long fringe
Macedonian, late 19th century
Wool

The red fringe on Macedonian women’s aprons was intended to serve a protective function and to encourage fertility.

Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH, Gift of Mary L. Matthews, 1944, KSUM 1995.17.1294

16. Red print dress
Valentino
Italian, 1980s
Printed silk crepe

Gift of Frances T. and Nathan H. Monus, KSUM 2000.43.8

17. Apron
Macedonian, early 20th century
Wool, metal bands, glass beads

This apron was probably an element from a traditional bridal costume from the Prilep region of Macedonia.

Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH, Gift of Edith E. Metcalf, 1953, KSUM 1995.17.1295
Both traditional and fashionable dress have incorporated fringe of many colors.

18. Knee bands
Romanian, early 20th century
Leather, wool yarn, metal bells

These decorative knee bands were worn by a male dancer from the village of Romos in the country of Hunedoara in Transylvania. The dancers were members of a secret society, the Călușari.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Martin, KSUM 1987.65.13 ab

19. Ivory wool vest with embroidery
Macedonian, late 19th century
Wool, metal

This wool vest is an element of the traditional costume from the village of Brusnik in Macedonia.

Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH, gift of Mary L. Matthews, 1944, KSUM 1995.17.133

20. Brown plaid taffeta dress
Probably American, 1850s
Silk taffeta, brass buttons, silk fringe

Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.79 ab

Multicolor fringe

Hats

Chinese government bureaucrats in imperial China known as mandarins wore hats with fringe which denoted their rank.
21. Hat
Chinese, late 19th century
Quilted silk, black velvet, crystal hat button, peacock feather, red silk fringe
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.1955
This hat would have belonged to a fifth rank official. Hat buttons were used as a quick identifier of the wearer’s rank. The peacock feather plume was awarded to officials of the fifth rank and above by the emperor for exemplary services rendered.

22. Hat
Chinese, early 20th century
Woven bamboo, red silk tassels, metal finial
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.1970
This hat was worn by a Chinese court official. The black velvet caps were worn for the winter while the woven rattan, like this one, were worn in the summer.

23. Gold silk dress with tiered, tasseled skirt
Label: “Mrs. W. Wilds, Auburn, NY”
American, ca. 1879-80
Jacquard woven silk, steel beads, silk tassels, silk taffeta
Silverman/Rodgers, KSUM 1983.1.156 ab

24. Woman’s vest (xiāpei) with tassel and fringe
Chinese, late 19th century
Blue silk, embroidery, silk tassels
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.785

25. Pleated skirt with embroidered panels
Chinese, late 19th century
Embroidered silk
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.796

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Tassels and fly fringe

In many cultures, fringes became so elaborate that they might include a series of tassels suspended from a lattice of net.
26. White silk moiré dress
Probably American, late 1860s
White silk moiré, chenille fringe, tassels
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.106

27. Velvet vest with tassel fringe
Possibly Eastern European, 20th century
Velvet, silk embroidery, silk tassels
This vest was part of the collection donated to the Museum by the noted artist and textile designer Vera Neumann, who collected clothing from around the world.
Gift of The Vera Neumann Collection, KSUM 1989.63.100

28. Dolman with beaded appliqué and fly fringe
American or European, ca. 1878
Wool, fringe, clear glass beads, silk ribbon
Fly fringe was developed in the 18th century and consisted of little knotted tufts incorporated into the fringe. This dolman from the 19th century shows the enduring appeal of this type of fringe.
Gift of Cora Ginsburg, KSUM 2000.33.3

Beaded fringe

Adding beads to fringe provides weight but also a reflective surface that sparkles as it sways.
29. **Blue embroidered dolman**  
Chinese for western market, ca. 1883-89  
Blue wool, silk embroidery, bead fringe  
Gift of Cora Ginsburg, KSUM 2000.33.2

30. **Metallic fringed dress**  
American, 1920s  
Black georgette, silver and gold sequins  
Gift in memory of Berenice H. Kent, KSUM 1990.42.124

31. **Pink beaded evening dress**  
Yves St. Laurent  
French, 1969  
Glass beads, sequins, silk  
Gift of Aileen Mehle, KSUM 1986.2.1

32. **Purple beaded bag**  
American, 1910s  
Silk faille, purple glass beads, metal frame, red, green and blue stones  
Gift of Marie and Domenic Mallama, KSUM 1991.76.9

33. **Gold and silver beaded bag**  
American, 1910s  
Gold and silver beads, gilded frame  
Gift of Mr. Wayne J. Vair, KSUM 1985.30.1