



WEARING PROPAGANDA

Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States
1931-1945

NOVEMBER 18, 2005 – FEBRUARY 5, 2006

THE BARD GRADUATE CENTER
FOR STUDIES IN THE DECORATIVE ARTS, DESIGN, AND CULTURE

FROM NOVEMBER 18, 2005, THROUGH FEBRUARY 5, 2006,

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture presents *Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931–1945*. This is the first major exhibition of propaganda fashion designed and produced in Japan, Britain, and the United States during the years of the Asia-Pacific War and World War II. Scheduled to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, the exhibition provides a unique opportunity to consider this underrecognized but visually exciting genre of wearable propaganda, noteworthy today not only for its design value but also as a reflection of the popular culture of the time.

Approximately 130 works of art illustrate how civilian textile design helped to promote wartime agendas in the three countries. The material on view includes clothing and accessories, textile samples, cartoons for textile designs, posters, and photographs. The objects are drawn from public and private collections throughout the United States and Britain, and from numerous private collections in Japan. Many of the objects, especially those from Japan, are unknown and have never before been documented, exhibited, or photographed.

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ABOVE: **Girl's kimono.** 1930s. Collection of Ranko Nagata.

RIGHT: **Detail of a nagajuban.** Early 1930s. Collection of Niigata Mosunokai.

Photographs: Nakagawa Taadaki/ARTEC Studio



INTERESTINGLY but not surprisingly, there are distinct cultural differences between Japan and the West in the use of propaganda textiles. The American and British examples were produced almost exclusively for women and were worn prominently in public, as headscarves, blouses, and dresses. In Japan, most of the clothing incorporating textiles with propaganda images was worn by men and young boys. The propaganda textiles used for men's garments appeared predominantly in traditional clothing such as *nagajuban* (long underkimono) or the linings of *haori* (jackets worn with kimono), and thus were, for the most part, designs that would be hidden from public view and seen only by people close to the wearer. Also striking is Japan's use of propaganda textiles in children's clothing. Many of the pieces in the exhibition are kimono for young boys and *omiyamairi* (shrine-visiting kimonos, comparable to christening gowns) that include potent military imagery.

THE EXHIBITION TEXTILES comprise clothing (kimono, *nagajuban*, *haori*, obi, blouses, dresses, scarves, and so forth); yardage or sample pieces; miscellaneous textiles such as handkerchiefs, tablecloths, and *furoshiki* (wrapping cloths); and,

for context, examples of other items of the popular visual and material culture of the time, including posters, toys, magazines, and fans.

THE EXHIBITION and its accompanying catalogue examine 20th-century printed textile designs as both a celebration and a reflection of everyday life and culture, a discussion that then segues into a review of the production of textiles with wartime propaganda designs. *Wearing Propaganda* also provides an in-depth examination of the most prevalent themes and motifs to be found in the propaganda textiles: modernity, empire, militarism, patriotism, sacrifice, heroes and leaders, text (slogans, words, and songs), alliances (Allies and Axis), and victory. Several themes are explored briefly here:

MODERNITY One of the chief themes in Japanese propaganda textiles, modernity is depicted primarily through war, imperialism, and modern technology.

TRADITION Tradition, in the form of cultural icons such as Mt. Fuji and folk heroes, figures largely in the propaganda textiles of Japan. In the United States, traditional icons such as the Constitution, George Washington, and the Pledge of Allegiance were more



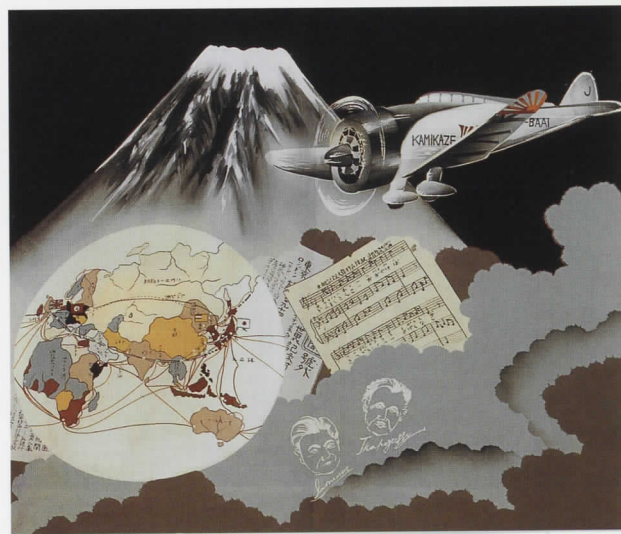
ABOVE: **Kimono**. 1940s. Collection of Yoku Tanaka.

RIGHT: **Detail of the lining of a man's haori**. 1937 Collection of Sachiko Hirai.

Photographs: Nakagawa Taadaki/ARTEC Studio

RELATED PROGRAMS An array of lectures, panels, and other offerings will be presented in conjunction with *Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931–1945*. For further information, please call 212-501-3011 or e-mail programs@bgc.bard.edu.

EXHIBITION TOURS Group tours of *Wearing Propaganda* may be scheduled Tuesday through Friday between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and on Thursday until 7:00 p.m. Reservations are required for all groups. For further information, please call the Bard Graduate Center Gallery at 212-501-3023 or TTY 212-501-3012, or e-mail gallery_assistant@bgc.bard.edu.





THE BARD GRADUATE CENTER is located at 18 West 86th Street, between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue, in New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$3 general, \$2 seniors and students (with valid ID), and free on Thursday evenings. For further information about the Bard Graduate Center and upcoming exhibitions, please visit our website at www.bgc.bard.edu.

Support for *Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931–1945* has been provided by The Blakemore Foundation.

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The Bard Graduate Center

Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture

18 West 86th Street, New York, NY 10024

PHONE 212-501-3000 FAX 212-501-3079

WEB www.bgc.bard.edu E-MAIL generalinfo@bgc.bard.edu

FRONT COVER: **Woman's scarf, "London Wall."** Designed by Arnold Lever for Jacqmar. 1940. Collection of Tim Lever.

BACK COVER: **Woman's scarf.** Produced by Jacqmar. Early 1940s. Collection of Paul and Karen Rennie.

Photographs: Bruce White