

Overcoat (mente) - from the wardrobe of László Esterházy?

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.: 52.2772.1 

Date of production: ca. 1640

Place of production: Italy; Hungary

Materials: jasper buttons; silver thread; silver-gilt thread; velvet

Techniques: embroidered

Dimensions: length: 108 cm
shoulder width: 52 cm

Originally light blue, now grayish green, the velvet summer mente narrows at the waist and funnels out from there, in accord with 17th century fashion. The couched embroidery covers the entire front, a wide strip at the bottom, the sleeves, the jags at the sides and the pockets. The tulip bushes with symmetrically backward turning tendrils starting out from a seven-petal palmette are lined up in horizontal rectangles, angled at the corners, arranged in smaller compositions around the pocket holes. It is the high-quality product of a workshop. The sleeves are conspicuously long reaching down to the bottom of the garment, so it is also called a "pipe-sleeved" mente. It could be worn traditionally as a coat, with the sleeves tucked up folded, but that concealed much of the sleeve embroidery. The other possibility was to put the arm through the hole at the elbow and let the sleeve hang down as an ornament. The line of jasper buttons was attached to the braided loops. The most popular mode of wearing it was throwing it over the shoulder. The acorn-shaped button attached to the long braided loop at the neck prevented it from slipping off the shoulder. The mente, which belonged to the wardrobe of Pál Esterházy (1635–1713), was often worn by his descendants at festive events. Data reveal that Prince Miklós Esterházy (1869–1920) wore it at the coronation of the last king of Hungary, Charles IV (1916–1918) in 1916. It was restored and the lining replaced by Mrs Sándor Borsi in 1967.

Literature

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