

anne•marie
monin

ITALIAN EMBROIDERY



SICILE, ITALIE

CIRCA 1680

SILK THREAD, SILVER THREAD

DIMENSIONS :

H. 210 CM – L. 146 CM

H. 82 ⁴³/₆₄ IN – L. 57 ³¹/₆₄

ORIGIN : PRIVATE EUROPEAN COLLECTION

27, Quai Voltaire, 75007 Paris

The design of this exceptional embroidery is organised symmetrically along a vertical axis. Undulating, curving plant shoots bearing peonies and wildflowers unfurl across the fabric. Embroidered with silk thread in a highly naturalistic style, these flowering branches support a variety of birds whose postures are mirrored on either side of the hanging. The background, woven entirely in silver thread, magnifies the plant and animal designs of the hanging.

The embroidery of the peonies reminds us of the watercolours by Mario Nuzzi, known as Mario de' Fiori, now in the Palazzo Chigi. His body of work provided an abundant repertoire of motifs for European artists. A similar example is referenced in the book *Magnificenza nell'arte tessile della sicilia centro-meridionale* (p. 636), which also specifies that his taste for plant motifs was probably influenced by Orient and Indian hangings.



The design of the bird bears similarities to a canopy hanging made in Mazzarino in Sicily (*Magnificenza nell'arte tessile della sicilia centro-meridionale*, Giuseppe Maimone editore, p. 614).

The production of these luxury hangings required a high and minacious technique. The silver threads made by master silversmiths were extracted from the precious metal, which they wound onto a silk core, were meticulously embroidered by expert hands. Combined with the shimmering colours of the silk threads, the embroiderers create truly sumptuous pieces.

The ornamentation and specific embroidery work can be compared with the production of Sicilian manufacturers in the 17th century, particularly in the liturgical field, where a number of examples are held in international museum collections. The chasuble conserved in the Benedictine abbey of San Martino delle Scale, made by Sicilian embroiderers, with its silver thread background and floral and ornithological motifs, is an echo of our hanging (Splendori di Sicilia, Maria Concetta di Natale, p.230). However, in this case, it was probably intended to embellish a bed.



Broderie Palermitaine (détail)
Circa 1658
Trésor de Cathédrale,
Palerme, Italie



Broderie Sicilienne (détail)
Seconde moitié du XVIIe s.
San Martino delle Scale,
Abbaye bénédictine



Broderie Palermitaine (détail)
Circa 1658
Trésor de Cathédrale,
Palerme

The term embroidery in Italian, *ricamo*, derives from the Arabic *raqm*, literally meaning "to draw with a needle". Combined with silver and silk threads, embroidered hangings became veritable objects of pageantry for the highest dignitaries of society and their interiors.