

Object Summary



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Polychrome Embroidered Suzani with Star and Floral Motifs

19th - 20th century

Uzbekistan (Bukhara)

Cotton, silk threads

Overall: 90 x 67 in. (228.6 x 170.2cm)

Suzanis are embroidered textiles that originated in urban centers of present-day Uzbekistan. This suzani probably comes from Nurata, a region near Samarkand in present-day Uzbekistan. Suzani from this region are characterized by floral sprays arranged around a central cluster of flowers or rosette and surrounded by a regular border. Suzanis were an essential element of a young woman's dowry, hand stitched by groups of women in preparation for marriage. Women took great pride in their embroidery skills, as their creations were displayed in their homes and at important occasions, such as weddings and funerals. Women of all social strata, both Muslim and Jewish, participated in the art of suzani-making. Traditionally, these textiles were embroidered on strips of unbleached cotton called kasbah. This cloth was cut into strips and stitched together. A designated designer called a kalamkash outlined the larger elements of the design in ink. The highly respected role of kalamkash was usually filled by an older woman in the family or a professional draughts-women who would pass her skills along to her daughter. After the kalamash drew the design, the strips of cloth were separated, embroidered by several women at a time, and stitched together again. The smaller details of the design were incorporated by the individual embroiderers.