

Object Summary



Embroidered Silk and Cotton Shawl (Phulkari)

20th century

Pakistan (Western Punjab)

Cotton, floss silk

Overall: 47 1/2 x 91 1/2 in. (120.7 x 232.4cm)

This silk, embroidered shawl, or phulkari is densely embroidered in a lattice pattern, with red silk thread on white cotton cloth. Translated from Sanskrit, the word phulkari means “floral work” from phul (flower) and kari (work). The art of phulkari was practiced by women across many social positions in the Punjab region, now northern India and the Punjab province of Pakistan. Traditionally, phulkari making was a personal, creative practice; young girls were taught to embroider by their mothers, and each developed their own unique style within their family group. With its surface entirely covered with embroidery, this type of phulkari is called bagh, meaning “garden.” These elaborate textiles could take months or

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even years to create. They were presented to brides on their wedding day and passed as heirlooms from one generation to the next.