

**STITCH KINGS: THE INFLUENCE OF J & P COATS ON
TEXTILE DESIGN EDUCATION**

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J & P Coats established the Needlework Development Scheme (NDS) in 1934 in conjunction with the Scottish art colleges. Colin Martin, Coats's marketing director based in Vienna, conceived the idea and sought the support of the Scottish art colleges in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Martin was inspired by the enthusiasm for embroidery and needlework in Hungary and recognised the potential for the arousal of similar interest in the wealthy, relatively untapped market in rural Scotland.¹ The stated NDS aim was to encourage greater interest in embroidery and improve the standard of design through the setting up of an historical and contemporary embroidery reference collection. The collection was made available for study to colleges, schools and amateur groups, supported by publications and exhibitions to extend market opportunities in the UK. Coats invested heavily in the Scheme and undoubtedly saw it as a way of increasing thread sales.

The purpose of this research has been to examine the influence of Coats's commercial imperatives in the NDS and their dissemination of textile design derived from many different local cultures in Britain. While a considerable amount of literature has been published on Coats's business

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history, these studies neglect the relationship between Coats and the NDS. In the 1950s, Coats commissioned David Keir to write *The History of J & P Coats*, a comprehensive account that amounted to three volumes.² However neither that history nor J.B.K. Hunter's four volumes thirty years later, entitled *The Economic History of J & P Coats*, were ever published, and throughout these seven substantial volumes the NDS was not mentioned.³ Later historians have broadened our knowledge of this important company, but still gaps remain. Dong-Woon Kim's series of essays – written in the 1990s – on Coats's activities in Tsarist Russia and the United States, focused on aspects of the Coats family involvement in the development of J & P Coates as a multinational company; similar themes followed up in Mira Wilkins' "The History of the Multinational Enterprise."⁴ Yet the absence of discussion on the NDS looms large, and in order to address this deficiency the approach followed here has been to focus on Coats's anonymous funding of the Needlework Development Scheme, and upon the close relationships between the company's business organisation and the lending scheme.

The archival material in business, institutional, and museum archives used in this study came mainly Paisley Museum, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow University Business Archives and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Evidence of the financial support and vigorous promotion of the Scheme, and the subsequent impact of these efforts, were found in committee minutes, special publications and correspondence of the company. Coats's *News Reel* journals, for example, include articles on business operations in various countries and are a valuable resource for examining the broader issues stemming from textile provenance research. Complementing this approach was material-culture object-based analyses of textiles held in various UK collections, used here to identify collection patterns, provenance and typologies. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

College of Art, Glasgow School of Art (GSA), Dundee University, Robert Gordon University, The Embroiderers' Guild (Hampton Court), Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), Reading Museum and Leicester Museum collections, all include important surviving NDS textiles or manuscript sources. Cross-referencing of the textile objects and archive material revealed the provenance of many NDS textiles and identified connections with the regions of Coats's activity, many of which were close to their mills. Interviews, meanwhile, of personnel involved in the Scheme and of surviving relatives provided information unavailable in other sources.

Historians have noted that before the First World War J & P Coats was Britain's largest multinational company, and later in the 1930s was manufacturing thread in forty-three associated and subsidiary mills throughout the world, including Austria, Brazil, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.⁵ Like many others, the company's continued success was challenged by the economic depression that followed the 1929 Wall Street stock market crash, a period of struggle that had a significant impact on profit margins. In 1930-1, Coats attempted to rejuvenate itself by re-organising its internal structure and committee framework. The Central Agency (TCA), established earlier in 1889, was extended to be responsible for the selling policy of all markets. And the company management went about setting up other agencies to target specific aims. In 1933 as a precursor to the NDS, Coats established an agency in Europe to collect patterns from all parts of the world. The aim here was to seek inspiration for designs that would then benefit their trade and help supply and inspire college students to produce future marketable designs.⁶ This activity correlates with Coats's visionary business approach whereby they used the latest and best

technology to respond to market demands, creating threads specific for varied uses. For example, explaining the company's capacity to invent and manufacture different threads, Keir writes:

In Poland before World War One, you could tell where you were by the thread needed. In the Russian part Coats's three ply glaze was required, in the Austrian part Coats's six cord thread, and in the German part Coats's four cord light polish.⁷

Coats's innovative systems and practises enabled them to dominate markets, and with their thread-manufacturing business an important link in the British textile industry, they looked continuously for ways to encourage better standards of design. Favourably, prior to the start of the NDS, a climate of improvement already existed. In 1926 British textile industrialists were criticised for their mimicry of historic and foreign styles and were then encouraged to adopt modern design styles similar to those found in European industry.⁸ Coats were willing to support this call, and their support for innovative design was built on a proud record of promoting complex and innovative design in trade shows since the 1880s.⁹ Impetus was added to the modern design debate by the 1932 V&A Museum exhibition *Modern Embroidery*. Organised by the British Institute of Industrial Arts the exhibition was supported by the Board of Education. Noticeably, it appears the inclusion of European artists and designers who were involved in the Scheme or were employed by Coats, suggests the company recommended particular artists and designers to the organisers. The event featured British and European embroidery, including designs from France, Sweden, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland, Italy, and USA, including artists of international renown, such as Emmy Zweybrück-Prochaska, Rebecca

Crompton, and Kathleen Mann.¹⁰ The following year a special volume of *The Studio* was published largely based on the *Modern Embroidery* exhibition.¹¹ The edition illustrated the exhibition's designs and provided instructions on reproducing the works. This mimicked a practice found in Coats's own journal *The Needlewoman*, with the exhibition's significance for boosting textile design coming from the support it drew from industry as well as the trade press.

Coats developed further initiatives in 1933 when, for example, they established the *Agence Centrale et Filiteries Reunies* in France as well as the Central Service Bureau to collect patterns and embroideries world-wide for commercial and educational purposes.¹² Aligned with this was the pivotal role Coats had planned with the 1934 appointment of the internationally renowned designer Emmy Zweybrück-Prochaska as the European advertising director for the company's German subsidiary Mez AG in Freiburg.¹³ Zweybrück-Prochaska operated a design atelier in Vienna, working with women such as Felice Hansch (who later married Colin Martin).¹⁴ Other mills, including the Harlander, near Vienna, then commissioned designs from Zweybrück's embroidery workroom to use for promotional purposes in trade exhibitions.¹⁵ Some of these designs were later acquired for the NDS and this illustrates Coats's re-distribution of what were purely commercial designs as inspiration for students in the educational and (furtively) commercial scheme.

Other parallels exist between Coats management of the Scheme and their business systems. A previous business history study by Kininmonth argued that the company's "accounting of investments in subsidiaries was kept separate and dividends were transferred to Coats obscuring the systems to investors."¹⁶ These practises instilled a culture of secrecy regarding the firm's finances whereby management who were mostly family members held exclusive information.¹⁷ A similar situation existed in the NDS as

Coats's funding of the Scheme was conducted anonymously. Frances Cooper, Principal of Dundee College of Art, explained at the outset of the Scheme that institutions maintained by public funding could not in any way be directly connected with an arrangement sponsored by an industrial concern or involved in commercial operations. It was this principle that was responsible for Coats's original decision to leave the workings of the Scheme entirely in the hands of the Permanent Committee (see below).¹⁸ Anonymity facilitated the involvement of publicly funded bodies such as the Scottish art schools and the Scottish Education Department. Later it allowed the Scheme to draw in the support of important personnel from museums and education authorities. This would have been impossible had the commercial operation been overt. Anonymous funding, though generous and equivalent to almost £3 million today, was a radical departure for a business with Coats's open philanthropic record. By concealing Coats's involvement and commercial motivation the company's reputation was protected.

As profits recovered following the global economic depression, Coats established the Needlework Development Scheme.¹⁹ It was one of many commercial and design initiatives to increase the production of handicraft thread at its Anchor Mills in Paisley.²⁰ Coats's Board authorised £7,000 to be spent over the next seven years from The Central Agency's advertising budget for 'Home Market Education,'²¹ signalling their intention to use it as a means of promoting embroidery. Coats's invitation to the Scottish further and higher education principals was made indirectly through Frank Michie, HM Chief Inspector of Schools. He invited the Scottish principals William Hutchison (Glasgow School of Art), Hubert Wellington (Edinburgh College of Art), David Sutherland (Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen), and Francis Cooper (Dundee College of Art) to form the Permanent Committee who met annually to oversee the Scheme. From the outset the

Principals were encouraged by a financial incentive of £50 each per annum for working costs. Their willingness to participate signalled a commitment to embroidery design education and the financial incentive overcame any apprehensions about being involved in the Scheme.

Coats financial support was complemented by the art schools' own commitment. In 1936 Glasgow School of Art (GSA) gave the Scheme tremendous backing by circulating NDS textiles through their established Lending Museum. Eighty schools in the west of Scotland borrowed up to twelve textiles for a one-year period.²² Loans to amateur groups began in 1938 when collections of embroideries were loaned to Women's Rural Institutes and continuation classes received twelve textiles for two weeks at a time. The link to amateur groups enabled Coats to promote their commercial aims more widely to various social classes to enable them to access designs from numerous cultural regions. At the same time as the NDS collection was circulated to education and amateur organisations, to help promote modern design and interest in embroidery Coats commissioned GSA students to produce designs such as the overused crinoline lady for sale to amateur groups. Design dissemination extended internationally as NDS packages were sent to Australia and New Zealand for both educational and commercial purposes. From the outset, Coats planned to work with the GSA to disseminate design as widely as possible in Scotland and abroad with generous textile loans.

Connections between Coats's management, their agents abroad and subsidiaries created a strong direction from the outset of the Scheme to enable the collection of some of the most outstanding designs available from a wide spread of geographic locations. The best foreign contemporary embroidery collected during the 1930s was from countries at the forefront of textile design including Austria, Germany and Italy. During the early stages of the Scheme Scottish Art

School lecturers were commissioned by Coats to collect outstanding modern designs from Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany. Alex Russell, Head of Design, at Dundee College of Art, collected designer textiles during his 1934 visit to Austria and Germany. Russell spent £300 on textiles characterised by their modernist appearance. Kathleen Mann, GSA embroidery lecturer, visited France and Italy also spending £300 on textiles.²³ The art school lecturers collected examples of designs which they wished to use in embroidery teaching to assist the development of a modern design aesthetic in Scotland.

Coats's agents used a different approach whereby they supported the Scheme by collecting rural designs wherever their mills were located in central Europe, Denmark, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Colin Martin in his travels as Coats's sales manager, journeyed on horseback throughout central Europe visiting agencies and collecting textiles. The rural embroideries produced for tourist markets were similar to state-promoted works designed at a time when nationalist ideologies were dominant. The personal taste of the agents contributed to the collection practice. Contrasting with the agents' approach was the acquisition of designs from significant exhibitions, such as the *Paris International Exhibition* (1937) and the *Seventh Milan Triennial* (1930s). This suggests that some surviving NDS textiles were the most stunning designs available at that time and are thus rare, high quality examples from the modernist era.

Despite the Scheme's commercial and educational purposes individual preferences and taste shaped the collection of rare historical, peasant, ethnic and modern designs. Coats's managing director, Sir James Henderson, and Martin had many good contacts to help them acquire significant embroideries. Henderson was resident in Milan during the fascist era. He sourced many fascist-styled Italian designs from commercial and artistic sources, convents and

fascist schools.²⁴ In Italy, Henderson was able to exploit the entrepreneurial freedom of the fascist regime that was less restrictive than the German-imposed requirements. Coats were able to expand and explore almost independently in Italy.²⁵ Henderson became one of Italy's leading industrialists during that era and while operating at the highest level in business showed his commitment to the Scheme by sourcing textiles in a fascist design style for the collection.²⁶

Other textiles in the Scheme appear 'modern' but subtly reference powerful, political issues that existed during the period of intense political activity and economic deprivation. Continuing from the 1920s into the thirties, industry and government initiatives supporting textile design were widespread through northern Europe. For example the Third Reich gave considerable support to the Verinigte Werkstätte in Munich for the production of textiles. Zweybruck-Prochaska's modernist designs made at the Verinigte Werkstätte were commissioned as appropriate for the ambience and elite Third Reich clientele of the first class saloon on the liner, S.S. Bremen. Although decorative these embroideries were modernist in style. Their decorative nature has contributed to their exclusion from histories of abstract, modern design. The political overtones were not often recognised when the works were viewed out of context. A copy of Zweybruck's design included in the S.S. Bremen saloon, made at the Verinigte Werkstätte, is held in the GSA NDS collection.

A contrasting design style is evident in the more openly commercial style characterised by a Zweybrück tea cloth held in the NDS Robert Gordon University collection. In a modern design style it features Hungarian inspired floral and bird peasant motifs. After use in trade exhibitions, transfers for the design with making instructions were published by Coats's subsidiary, Mez AG, in the *Handarbeiten Aller Art* journal in 1939. The tea cloth then

passed into the NDS collection. Images in *Handarbeiten Aller Art*, the re-named *Stickerien und Spitzen*, were attributed to Zweybrück at Mez AG indicating she was employed to produce a range of commercial styled designs.²⁷ Impressed by its commercial success Coats encouraged Zweybrück-Prochaska and her team to interpret designs from throughout the world as evidenced by works in the NDS collection.²⁸ The German design journals *Stickerien und Spitzen* and *Handarbeiten Aller Art* included regular full-page embroidery advertisements and articles posted by Mez AG. These journals were unusual in that Hitler did not suppress the publisher Alexander Köch (based in Stuttgart), unlike many other publishers of German modern art and design journals.

Earlier studies have noted the importance and impact of the NDS ecclesiastical textiles on British design.²⁹ At the outset of the Scheme CH McKenzie, Deputy Director of the Central Agency prioritised ecclesiastical works for collection, perhaps influenced by the established appreciation for ecclesiastical embroidery in Scotland. To facilitate the collection of ecclesiastical designs Coats used their business network connections to source German designs from near Coats's subsidiaries in Leipzig, Freiburg and Munster, where embroidery artists subtly referenced political and social situations. The designs feature disproportionate, enlarged upper bodies and halos, to enhance the holiness of the image. These were created while the political regime attempted to sideline the Catholic women's doctrine. The women were creatively designing within contradictory limitations, on the one hand suppressed by the paternalistic views of the modernist era, but on the other hand, encouraged in Central Europe by Fascist and Nazi regimes to produce religious embroideries.

The minimalist stylisation and abstraction of biblical figures is in line with modernism, but the decorative use of gold thread and fabric is against the modernist mandate.

These designs had a critical influence on Scottish ecclesiastical designs. For example, esteemed Scottish embroiderer, Kathleen Whyte, developed design ideas from the German works and encouraged her students to study the German designs held in the GSA collection.³⁰ In this manner, Scottish textile teachers played a lead role encouraging the dissemination of these designs to their students. The Scottish teachers enthusiastically supported the NDS, in particular, Kathleen Mann, Head of Embroidery, GSA. Mann aimed to stimulate a new style of design reflecting current trends in art. She taught a creative approach, integrating original design and making in embroidery that was distinct from Coats's approach that promoted copying. An accomplished draughtswoman, Mann's books *Peasant Costume in Europe I and 2* (1931 and 1936), presented peasant designs in a modern style and were used in the GSA embroidery course.³¹ She played a crucial role in the formative years of the Scheme both designing for Coats, teaching and organising the circulation of the NDS loans. (fig. 1). Coats's complemented the GSA's approach adopting The Central Agency's advertising department's willingness to promote embroidery through publications. They published books, contributed articles and advertising to journals, such as the highly regarded German *Stickerien und Spitzen* and the London based *The Needlewoman*.³²



Figure 1: Kathleen Mann, 1930s stitched panel.³³

During the pre-WWII period English artist Rebecca Crompton was commissioned by Coats to complete an extensive lecture tour of Scotland. Their generous funding allowed a 200-piece travelling exhibition to accompany Crompton on her tour. This strengthened Coats's link to the English education authorities, as Crompton was an examiner for Women's Crafts for the Board of Education in England. Harrod in her book *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* highlighted the 1930s development of self-expression and spontaneity in embroidery as a significant advance in design.³⁴ Crompton and her former pupil, Kathleen Mann, led this design style. Harrod confirms the initiatives undertaken by Coats through the NDS contributed to the advance of a modernist design style from Scotland into England and the whole of Britain.

In Europe Coats promoted actively a cross-cultural exchange of design and embroidery through the provision of classes for their mill girls, whilst they were providing European designs to British embroiderers to study.³⁵ Mariska

Undi was commissioned by the Hungarian Ministerium für Cultus und Unterricht to produce design publications and embroideries in response to what they considered 'was a dangerous invasion of western decorative forms by the thread manufacturers.'³⁶ The state agencies encouraged the production of nationalist styled designs overlooking the many different international influences already borrowed and interpreted. Coats recognised the potential of the designs and promoted the Hungarian style by publishing a derivation of an Undi design for embroiderers to copy on the cover of the July 1934 edition of *The Needlewoman*.³⁷ The company showed enthusiastic support for the Scheme in numerous initiatives, in particular they used their various publications to promote the new modern design style.

The 1930s scheme brought an increase in thread sales but was placed on hold during the war years. The closure of the scheme in 1939, as war loomed, was linked to strategic Government decisions placing restrictions on imports and manufacture of thread.³⁸ At a time when Coats's thread sales had been increasing, the Board of Trade limited Coats's production of handcraft threads to ten percent for export only.³⁹ Similarities existed between the way Coats managed their commercial enterprise and the NDS. Earlier studies have reported Coats's long-term business success was in part due to an ability to anticipate and react to political decisions.⁴⁰ They developed an ability to circumvent decisions that threatened their market access.⁴¹ Similar business management practises were used in directing and expanding the NDS. For example, earlier in 1944, Coats's Joint Sales Committee proposed the NDS be re-introduced with certain modifications and instructed Martin to find suitable contacts in London. The reopening of the Scheme in 1945 was linked to decisions made by the Board of Trade removing the ban on the import of handcraft threads.⁴² As well, after protracted negotiations an agreement was made with Treasury to allow

textiles to be imported free of duty. Coats liaised with Government organisations to ensure trade rules were in place in order for the NDS to succeed in the post-World War II era.

A key expansion strategy was instigated with the invitation to Leigh Ashton, the newly appointed director of the V&A, to open a NDS exhibition in London.⁴³ The exhibition celebrated the re-opening of the Scheme after the war and provided an opportunity for Coats to begin negotiating with V&A's management personnel. This was granted on the grounds that the NDS was 'strictly non-advertising' as explained in a letter written by George Wingfield-Digby, V&A's representative on the NDS Advisory committee.⁴⁴ Grace Thomson, Ministry of Education and JD McGregor, Scottish Education Board joined Martin on the Advisory committee. The membership provided direct links to the schools and art schools in England enabling them to extend their influence and further their effective promotion by developing wider geographic influence. The agreements with the V&A allowed Coats to transform the NDS by expanding embroidery circulation beyond Scotland. The membership of the Advisory Committee would have been impossible had the commercial operation been overt. Anonymous funding, though generous and equivalent to almost £3 million was a radical departure for a business with Coats's open philanthropic record. By concealing Coats's involvement and commercial motivation both Coats and the public bodies were able to protect their reputations.

Coats extended circulation to England to receive a better return from TCA advertising budget. Undoubtedly, Coats's aim to encourage embroidery in a commercial initiative, as a promotional aspect of their business, was appropriately housed in the advertising budget. The market leaders were able to extend their influence and further their effective promotion by developing an NDS advisory

committee that included representatives from the Glasgow NDS, Scottish Education Board, Ministry of Education, and V&A enabling them to extend their links to England.⁴⁵ Once again Coats's anonymous funding enabled the Scheme to involve publicly funded bodies while the commercial initiatives were obscured.

Commercial success guaranteed social relationships between Coats's political, educational and cultural networks. For example, the Board of Trade, Education Board, Council of Industrial Design (COID), Cotton Board, V&A and key personnel, such as Kenneth Clark (The National Art Gallery director).⁴⁶ This network guaranteed economic, political and social networks to engage in the debates of the day and promote Coats's commercial enterprise through NDS initiatives. In an unusual project for the NDS, Clark commissioned his mistress, Mary Kessell, to produce experimental drawings for the NDS. Secondary school teachers interpreted and embroidered Kessell's artworks.⁴⁷ This project was considered to have failed at the time and was not repeated. Kessell's drawings and the embroideries are held in the V&A Museum collection highlighting either the high regard shown for this unusual initiative or the importance given to the Kessell/Clark relationship.

In an unusual enterprise at the re-start of the Scheme, in 1945, Coats encouraged the purchase of embroideries from Sweden and Denmark and supported Agnes McCredie, GSA, to visit to survey their teaching philosophies. McCredie was an expert in weave rather than embroidery and did not implement any of the new ideas into her teaching. Following her period of influence, authority given to the Scottish teachers was removed.⁴⁸ A pattern of hiring overseas experts to lead the Scheme was introduced. In 1946 the V&A began their support by circulating designs to complement the Scheme's collection. Coats negotiated with the V&A to utilise the mechanisms already in place at minimal expense to

the firm. Initially the V&A circulated 200 framed textiles to schools in England, but later reduced this to thirty.

Coats appointed the overseas embroidery experts to lead positions in the NDS for two-year periods. Elsi Köhler, a qualified architect, was appointed head of the NDS in 1947, and travelled to Switzerland to investigate needlework education.⁴⁹ In the late 1920s sophisticated designs by Köhler appeared in various German embroidery publications including *Stickerien und Spitzen*. These publications reveal Köhler resided in Leipzig until 1929, then took up residence in Vienna in 1933-4 following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. After her survival of the Nazi era and her subsequent move to Scotland, she may have feared harassment, as she elected to erase her artistic past when in Scotland. Köhler was uncomfortable with the cool reception she received after moving there. She must have elected to disown her 'too modern' designs as none of her works in the NDS collection were attributed to her in NDS lists or indeed in current NDS holdings at the National Museum of Scotland and the Robert Gordon University and Dundee University collections.⁵⁰

The work of the NDS changed again when an important new design influence was brought in 1948 by Ulla Kockum, from Stockholm, who took over the leadership role. Kockum was one of three people recommended to Martin by Mrs Sampe-Hultberg a leading figure in Swedish craft circles.⁵¹ Kockum implemented many practises based on the Scandinavian craft tradition. A paradox existed in Coats's drive to improve design and taste as they entrenched a commercially led copying approach to design supported by the Swedish craft practise of producing duplicates of the same design. Coats encouraged the implementation of the Swedish design approach, providing ready-made designs for embroiderers. This contrasted with the British teacher's more creative approach to use the embroideries as inspiration rather

than copying the designs.⁵² To ensure the Scheme's marketing success Coats employed expert embroiderers from various countries to guide the Scheme.

Further support was offered to the teachers by the creation of a museum and library at Coats's Wellington street headquarters in Glasgow. Martin's success in securing funding from different sources is evident in this venture. Coats's Staff Council funded the development and Martin's good friend Kockum developed Swedish decor for the museum. Martin purchased £200 worth of Swedish books for the library.⁵³ A different source of funding was acquired from the Arts Council for one of the more extensive NDS exhibitions. In 1948 the British Arts Council supported the Scheme by funding a touring NDS exhibition. Then later in 1951 another NDS exhibition toured Britain to coincide with the Festival of Britain celebrations funded by the Arts Council.⁵⁴ In these ways the funds from TCA's advertising budget were regularly supplemented by other sources.

Prior studies have recognised the importance of the NDS during the 1950s when it was led by English experts, Dorothy Allsopp and later Iris Hills.⁵⁵ Allsopp increased activity, circulating more textiles, and exchanging designs and ideas through trade exhibitions and publications that contributed to the emergence of a new design aesthetic. The frequent change in management was to maintain a lively fresh approach and ensure contact with a wide range of designers and cultural influence.

There are several possible explanations for the increased impact of the Scheme. Advertising, branding and marketing through classroom exhibitions and publications simultaneously created consumer demand. The NDS published booklets three times a year, provided free to schools until 1958. These publications were duplicated by Coats's Anchor press for sale, less any text connecting them

to the NDS. Approximately £135,000 was spent on publicity from 1948-1962.⁵⁶

The Central Agency, Coats's Glasgow based marketing division, established the NDS as a marketing ploy with the aim to stimulate embroidery design and craft and thereby sell more thread. This motivation was supported with aggressive marketing practices. During the post-war era the NDS promoted embroidery and sold yarns to the Womens' Institute members whose networks were established to provide social opportunities for rural women. Similar approaches were used with the Townswomen's Guilds. Coats continued its lobbying of education institutions including the Royal School of Needlework and Royal College of Art and government agencies such as COID until the closure of the Scheme. Coats lobbying of education authorities and the Women's' organisations brought commercial rewards.

Coats used their worldwide networks, collaborated with cultural, educational and political leaders and employed leading embroiderers from various countries to ensure the Scheme's success from 1934-39 and 1945-1960. Coats's intention to network with their agents throughout the world was evident from the early stages, collecting ethnic and embroideries commissioned for trade purposes and producing interpretations of ethnic designs in their studios stitched in Coats's embroidery threads. The relationship that existed between their commercial activity and the provision of inspiration for students reveals a strong commitment by Coats to the NDS.

Coats's support for the NDS went beyond funding for a textile collection, as they established numerous initiatives including the collection of valuable art and design books for a reference library at their headquarters in Glasgow. Through the promotion of the design style in publications and the lending of textiles, Coats supported the assimilation of design into British culture and an ethnic style of embroidery design

developed in Britain. The corporation's global network contributed both to the acquisition and production of designs and had a major impact on embroidery during this period. The personal taste of educators, museum personnel, and those motivated by business demands was reflected in the collection. More than 5,000 predominantly European embroidered textiles were collected and circulated in primary, secondary and art schools and to amateur groups.⁵⁷

Coats's anonymous funding presented an uneasy financial and ideological relationship between the industrialist and the educators. They concealed their involvement both externally and internally, as they patronised and encouraged embroidery design across Europe and its introduction into the UK. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that Coats as market leaders had considerable influence on embroidery development before and after World War Two. They disseminated both artist-designed and commercial designs in their cross-cultural endeavours. Coats extended and further shaped a strong Scottish art and design embroidery identity. German embroidery, for example, had a marked influence on Scottish embroiderers who designed modernist ecclesiastical works in a diverse array of stitch techniques gleaned from other embroideries. NDS designs obliquely referencing social, cultural and political events are important and powerful examples of embroidery by artists engaging in debates during an era of intense political activity. Coats, through the NDS disseminated design from British culture into countries throughout their business empire through the lending of embroideries, exhibitions and publications. They transferred British design into pre World War Two Europe in order to encourage embroidery and further sales through strong connections with subsidiary mills. The evidence from this study suggests that Coats utilised the NDS embroidery design reference collection as a means to influence textile design throughout the UK and beyond.

Transnational relations were of significance in design as the different approaches were dispersed and assimilated into British culture and an ethnic design aesthetic evolved. They advertised widely, published embroidery books in several languages, place articles in various journals and promoted *The Needlewoman* journal internationally, usually through a subsidiary.

The Scheme closed in 1961 as Coats developed new company directions in response to a change in tariffs and amalgamation with Patons and Baldwin, the knitting company. In 1961 Coats had twenty-five mills in fifty countries with 40,000 employees, securing a profit of £4.8 million.⁵⁸ It is therefore likely they closed the Scheme as the merger with Patons Baldwin introduced new commercial directions. Interest in embroidery was as strong as ever and 1,500 NDS loans were being made annually. However, the new management regime was looking to diversify.⁵⁹

At the time of the closure of the Scheme it was known that Coats were the financial backers, and their considerable financial investment, international vision and publicity ensured interest in embroidery grew to a remarkable level, and efforts to sell more threads and mould consumer taste were effective. Coats influence and the impact of the NDS is evidenced by Government's 1964 recovery from war plan that included needlework in the National Diploma of Design.⁶⁰ Significantly, the Scheme established as a marketing ploy through the acquisition of a lending collection continues through the remaining textiles and their legacy of improving textile design and education opportunities. Many unique and beautiful works are held in prestigious museum and art school collections.

Notes

¹ S. Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts: Innovate or Imitate: Issues of Aesthetics, Collecting, Education, Making and Marketing in J & P Coats's Needlework Development Scheme: 1934-1962," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Glasgow School of Art, 2004.

² David Keir, "The History of J & P Coats," Coats Viyella PLC. Uxbridge. Typescript. 1962.

³ J.B.K. Hunter, "The Economic History of J & P Coats," Glasgow, Typescript 1984. Initially all the volumes were unavailable for consultation. Negotiations allowed a series of individual readings to be heard over a period of several weeks. Excerpts were read from The Economic History of J & P Coats, questions asked and issues arising were discussed. Hunter confirmed the NDS was never mentioned in the numerous conversations he had with Coats's managers.

⁴ Mira Wilkins, *The History of Multinational Enterprise*. Ed. A. Rugman. Oxford Handbook of International Business (Oxford: Oxford University Press.2009).

⁵ K. Dong-Woon, "J & P Coats as a multi-national before 1914," *The Business History Review* 4, Winter, 523-51.

⁶ J & P Coats," Joint Sales Committee Book", Glasgow University Business Records: UGD Coats Patons 199/1/1/5.

⁷ Keir, "The History of J & P Coats," 1962, 92.

⁸ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 62.

⁹ See S. Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 70-2.

¹⁰ Many of these designs were acquired for the NDSS and are held in Scottish collections National Museum of Scotland, Glasgow School of Art and Duncan of Jordanston, Dundee.

¹¹ M. Hogarth, *Modern Embroidery*, (London: The Studio, 1933).

¹² Kirstin Kininmonth and Sam McKinstry, "Stitching It Up: Accounting and Financial Control at J & P Coats Ltd. c.1890 -1960," *Accounting History* 12, No. 4 (2007): 367-391.

¹³ See, S. Heffernan, "Politics and Trade in Design: Emmy Zweybrück-Prochaska's Influential Textile Designs in the Needlework Development Scheme," *Textile: the Journal of Cloth and Culture* 5, No. 1 (2007): 50-65.

¹⁴ C. Martin, *Felice Hansch in Sport 1922-1934* (Glasgow: Colin Martin, 1989).

¹⁵ F. Heller. Email to author, (2002).

¹⁶ Kininmonth and McKinstry, "Stitching it up," 379.

¹⁷ Kirstin Kininmonth, "The Growth, Development and Management of J & P Coats Ltd. c.1890 -1960: An analysis of Strategy and Structure," *Business History* 48, no. 4 (2006): 551-579.

¹⁸ NDS. Permanent Committee Minutes. Paisley Museum Archives: 3151 3/2/1. Typescript. Mar.1938.6.

¹⁹ Initially, from 1934-1938, it was referred to as the Needlework Development Scotland Scheme.

²⁰ On 21 September 1933 the Board of J & P Coats authorised the Merchandising committee to scope the fostering of needlework in Scotland.

²¹ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts."

²² Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 79.

²³ NDS Minutes, Paisley Museum Archives, 3151 3/2/1, 18 May 1934.

²⁴ J.B.K. Hunter, "Sir James Henderson," *Directory of Scottish Business Biography 1860-1960: The Staple Industries*. Eds. A. Slaven and S. Checkland, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), vol. 1, 389-92); H. Frew-Patterson, Interview with author. Glasgow, 2002; Anon. "The Italian Mills" in *The News Reel* 10 no 2, 3-6. Sep. 1956; *NDS Report*. Paisley Museum Archives: 3151 3/2/1.

²⁵ Anon. Readings to author, 2002.

²⁶ Later, in 1956, Henderson was appointed *Grand Ufficiale of the Order of San Gregorio Mango*, the highest papal honour which could be ordered to a non-Catholic. J.B.K. Hunter, "Sir James Henderson," 364.

²⁷ K.M. Stickereien aus der Ostmark. *Handarbeiten Aller Art* 8:180-5 1939.

²⁸ Felice Martin, Colin's wife worked at Zweybruck-Prochaska's workroom in Vienna.

²⁹ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 75.

³⁰ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 178.

³¹ See Kathleen Mann, *Peasant Costume of Europe: Book I* (London: A & C Black, 1931) and Kathleen Mann, *Peasant Costume of Europe: Book II* (London: A & C Black, 1936).

³² Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 53.

³³ Mann, *Peasant Costume of Europe: Book II*, 80.

³⁴ See Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Yale University Press, 1996).

³⁵ Keir, "The History of J & P Coats," 32.

³⁶ See Mariska Undi, "Fancy Needlework and Weaving: The History of Hungarian Decorative Embroidery," in *Fancy Needlework and Weaving*:

The History of Hungarian Decorative Embroidery (Hungarian Ministerium für Cultus und Unterricht: Budapest, 1934).

³⁷ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 22.

³⁸ J & P Coats, Director's Meetings Minute Book 6. Glasgow University Business Archives: UGD Coats Patons. 199/1/1/6. 1945.

³⁹ J & P Coats, Joint Sales Committee Minute Book. Glasgow University Business Records. UGD Patons 199/1/1/32 26 Nov. 1946. 22.

⁴⁰ Hunter, "The Economic History of J & P Coats."

⁴¹ Kininmonth, "The Growth, Development and Management of J & P Coats," 568.

⁴² Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 79.

⁴³ Ashton was a good friend of Kenneth Clark, Martin's brother in law.

⁴⁴ Wingfield-Digby was a reluctant member of the advisory committee.

He was encouraged by Martin's offer of lunch at the Hyde Park Hotel and received gifts from Coats. Wingfield-Digby, G. Letter to Leigh Ashton.

V&A Art and Design Archives. NDS Fol. 1.

⁴⁵ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 79.

⁴⁶ Clark was Colin Martin's brother-in-law.

⁴⁷ Kessell was a fine artist previously appointed by Clark as a Belson war artist.

⁴⁸ In 1946, Coats sponsored a visit by Feodova Pavlu, from Slovakia. She lectured at various art schools accompanied with an exhibition, giving impetus to the dissemination of Slovakian design in Britain.

⁴⁹ Kohler worked for Zweybrück in her Vienna atelier. Kohler has several works in the remaining NDS collection but these works are mis-attributed. Köhler, was possibly a friend of Martin's wife Felice as they worked together at Zweybrück workrooms.

⁵⁰ Personnel communication with Coats's employee Hannah Frew-Patterson.

⁵¹ NDS 1947. Report. Paisley Museum Archives. 3151 3/2/1.

⁵² Ironically, at the same time, the Director of Coats, JOM Clark appealed to the Director of Education to allow art teachers to specialise in needlework.

⁵³ In 1962 valuable books were gifted to institutions along-with the NDS textiles. Many of the books and journals are now both rare and valuable.

⁵⁴ The Festival of Britain adopted the traditional Swedish snowflake design in its branding.

⁵⁵ C. Howard, *Twentieth Century Embroidery in Great Britain 1940-1963*, (London: Batsford, 1983).

⁵⁶ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 77.

⁵⁷ Heffernan, Design from Artefacts," 79.

⁵⁸ Kininmonth, "Stitching It Up," 23.

⁵⁹ In 1961 Colin Martin was awarded an MBE for services to embroidery.

⁶⁰ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts."