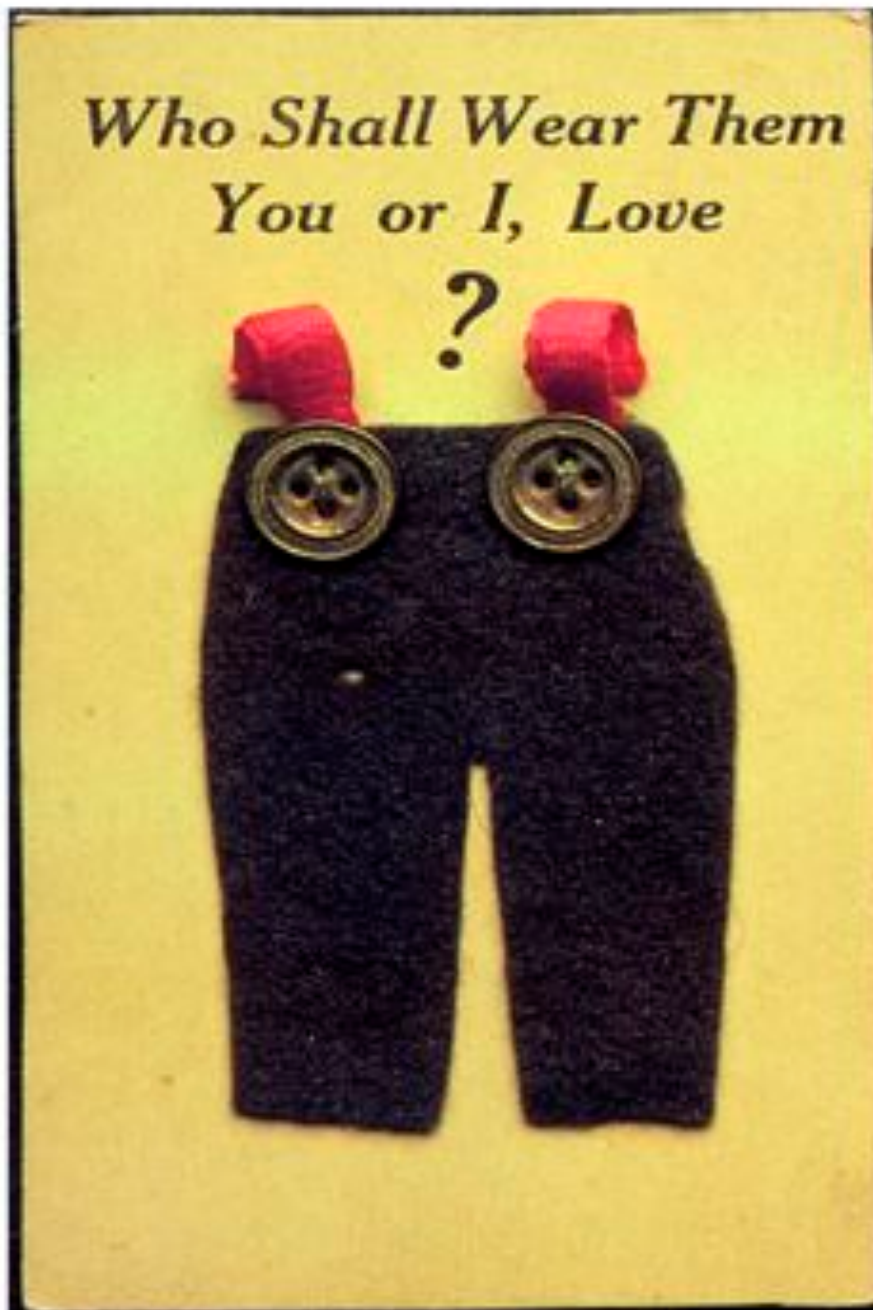


Between BUTTON and ART



When I thought about buttons, I thought about the plastic two, or four holed objects used on clothes. Maybe a different color, or a different size.

On the internet I found out that there are different blogs about buttons. On this blogs, button collectors and lovers discuss and communicate with each other. I did not really understand this love for the object. Also I found out that there are some famous buttonstores all over the world, runned by real button collectors.

I got into one of the few books which describe the history of the button. I was happily surprised when i actually discovered that this is a really nice history. The aim of my research is to show a little bit of this history which became so interesting to me, it is to have a closer look on this miniature works of art.

There is no time in history where buttons were unknown or not used. But the details of their origins got lost in the terrain of our prehistory. Apparently they were worn as batch or ornament, as recognized in old paintings and sculptures.

The 18th century is the first century that the button became more than ornamental duties. In this century the design of the buttons were moving between art, craft and machine production. The overcoat for the man got another model; it got longer than just the waist, and for this they needed more buttons to close the overcoat than before. Also they used buttons to decorate the pockets en sleeves.



Egyptians already found methods to imitate precious gems, but the French Jewel designer Georger Frederic Strass, improved the technique. He made the production of this glass jewels into a real industry. This provided a less expensive alternative for diamonds. Buttons became available for a bigger audience. P52

Also the Rococo style became popular for a lot of buttons through the century. Buttons were painted in the style of various famous artist from that time, for example Jean Antoine Watteau.



And Canaletto's paintings of touristic city views.



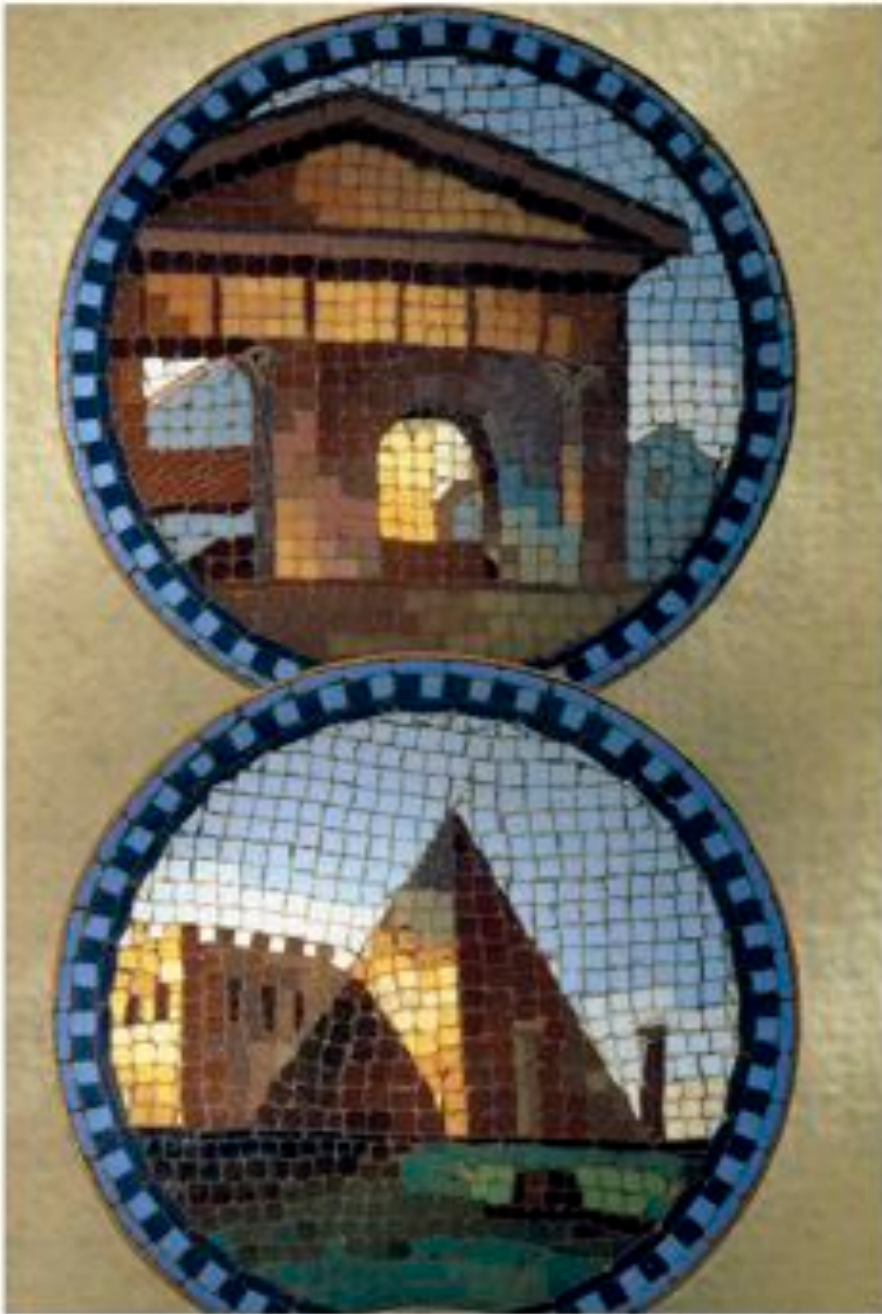
Different techniques to decorate buttons were used, and considered as art, or craft. Techniques were enameling, painting and drawing on paper, ivory and silk. Another technique was 'reverse painting,' with special pigment drawings were made on the inside of glass, and set to different kind of materials, a certain sensation of depth was created.



French buttonmakers used a technique which is called 'découpage.' The buttons were built up out of different layers of different textured paper.



At the end of the century Italia got known by the invention of micro mosaics. The beautiful tiny design were made of colored glass.



In the 19th century buttonmaking went into two different directions. It reflected on the continuing progress of the industrialization. This enlarged the range of materials of which buttons could be made. Also the button industry changed because of new technologies. But the traditional techniques survived.

Product of the romanticism remained. Pictures of cupids, lovers and picturesque landscapes continued to decorate buttons. The romantic button artists also drew children as a symbol for irrational and primitive impulses.

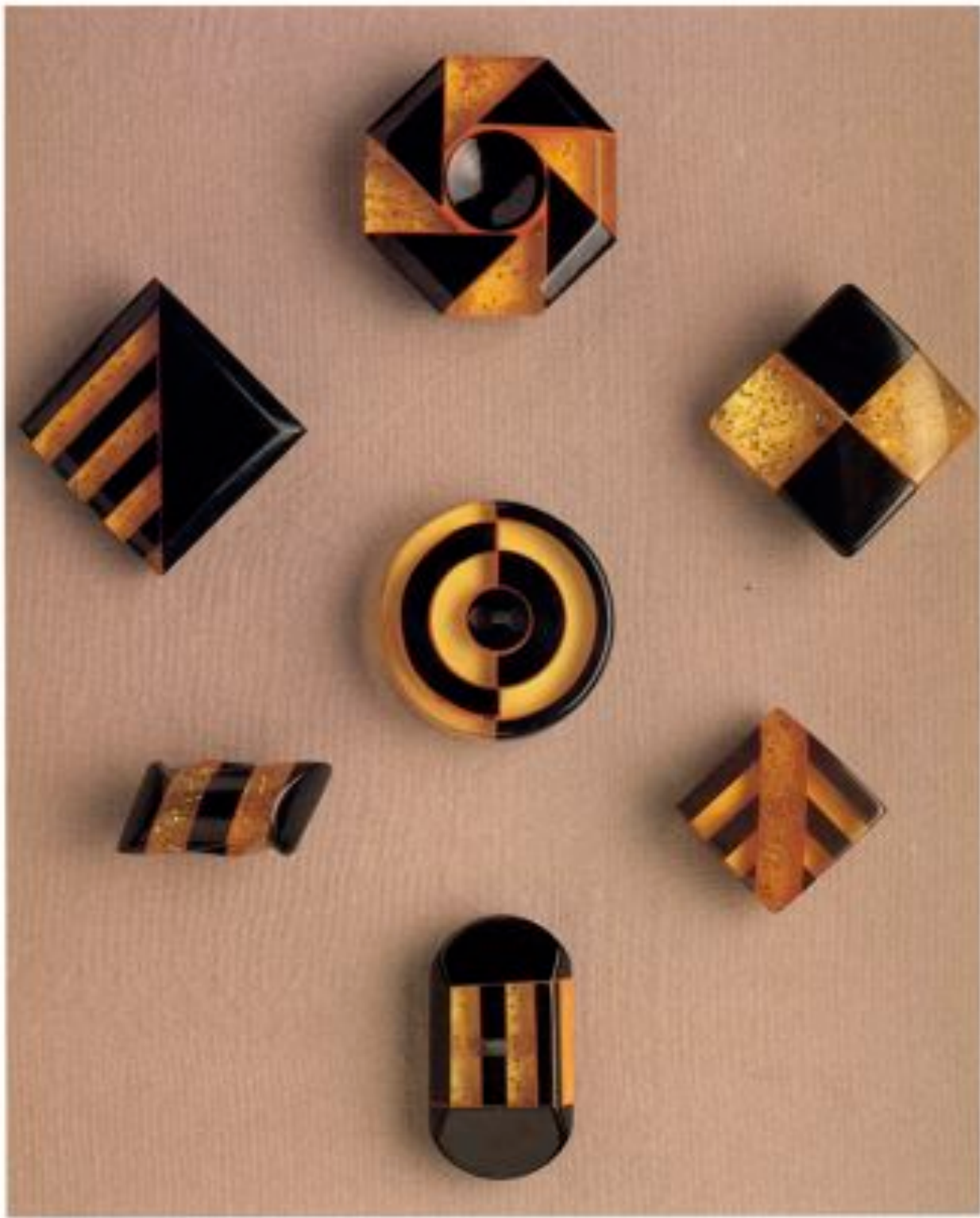
Kate Greenaway's drawings (English writer and illustrator of children books) got translated to the buttons.



The so called English 'inlay' buttons, were favorites because of their geometrical design. The technique was applying veneers, thin layers of shell, ivory and horn. Although they were inexpensive to produce, they created a luxury visual effect.



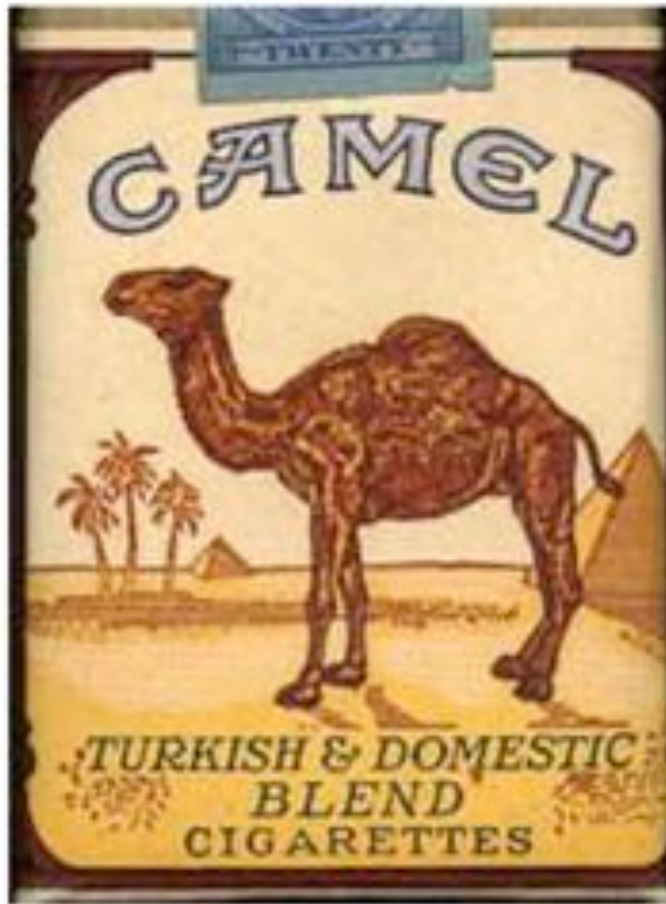
In the 20th century, around 1930, the Art Deco adapted well to the button format. It was flat and geometric.



The zipper (1883) got potential success in 1930. People got pride being able to dress themselves without help. (Nobody had to say 'BUTTON ME PLEASE') In the first two decades of the 20th century buttons became more simple. The simple four-holed button, introduced into men's fashion around the turn of the century, became standard for woman clothing too.

Bakelite (one of the first made plastics) replaced in the half of the century almost every other material. Plastic was called 'the material of a thousand uses'.

In 1940 popular buttons were replicas of common objects of miniature cigarette boxes, made out of paper.



Around the second world war button industry increased with whatever materials were available, such as plastics and woods.

Avant-garde designers made the button a primary focal point, the buttons made by inexpensive materials entered the world of haute-couture.

Nowadays we know this buttons. This simple buttons, so to say. By having a look at the history, my perspective on the object has changed. I can say I have a better understanding now, for the real collector. A shared interest.



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