Transcribing Dots
Batiks’ Journey from East to West

Design Report

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TRANSCRIBING DOTS: BATIKS' JOURNEY FROM EAST TO WEST

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Transcribing Dots: Batiks’ Journey from East to West

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Corcoran College of Art and Design

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Batiks have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. My maternal grandparents lived in Indonesia for two years while my Grandfather built and inspected trains for General Electric, and they brought back many souvenirs including batiks. My Grandmother always used her batik tablecloths for family gatherings, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, etc. Once I was big enough I started wearing my mother’s batik skirts and t-shirts to school and now to work. It wasn’t until recently when I took a Modern Textiles and Contemporary Fiber Art course at the Corcoran did I realize that the batik process is not well known. I decided to tell the story of batik for my thesis exhibition, with a special focus on the influences of the Dutch on the imagery and production of traditional batik.
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This thesis project is background research for an exhibition on Batiks. The research begins with the goals of the exhibition, the location and then the content and feel of the exhibition. The exhibition entitled *Transcribing Dots: Batiks, Journey from East to West* starts with the invention of the batik process. Then explains how the technique move westward and became fashionable in Europe at the turn of the 20th century. The exhibition will end with the explanation of how Batik disappeared in Western fashion and where it is still fashionable today.
Batik is one of the oldest and most enduring forms of textile decoration. Throughout time it has gone in and out of fashion, but it has never truly disappeared as a form of decoration. Batik is still considered high fashion in some countries today and is beginning to show signs of resurgence in the Western world.
CHAPTER 1

Explanation of Title

The title Transcribing Dots: Batik’s Journey from East to West comes from the Javanese roots of the word batik, amba means ‘to write’ and titik mean ‘dot or point’. The chart on the next page shows all the different names batik has been called by the countries that are represented in the exhibition. Since Indonesia is the starting off point for this exhibition I chose to use the root of the word batik for the title.
Figure 1

CHAPTER 1

Wax-Resist
(ancient form of textile design)

- Laran
  - Laxie
  - Blue Calico
      (Chinese)

- Batik
      (Javanese)
      roots: (amba +
      titik)

- Senshoku
  - Rozome
  - Sarasa
      (Japanese)

- Batik Belanda
      (Dutch Batik-named by the Javanese)

- Real Dutch Wax
      (Dutch)

- Adire eleko
      (Yoruba Tribe, Nigeria)

- Sadza Batik
      (Shona People of Zimbabwe)
Mission Statement

Transcribing Dots will explore the transformation in style, imagery, technique and use of batiks in both the east and west that began with the colonization of Indonesia by the Dutch in 1602. Visitors will have the ability to compare traditional batik imagery from Africa, China, India, Indonesia and Japan with the global batik trends created at the turn of the 20th century. This will be accomplished by exploring Dutch trade routes that enhanced the silk-road, and brought new textile traditions to Africa and Europe. Finally visitors will discover how the globalization of batiks changed the batik market and continues to influence the fashion world today.
Educational Objectives

Teach the visitors the defining characteristics of batiks including the defining characteristics particular to each region that creates batik.

Introduce visitors to the origins of batik and how the process spread across Asia before interference from the West.

Show visitors how the Dutch disrupted indigenous textiles traditions in Asia and Africa and eventually destroyed pre-existing textile trade routes between India and Southeast Asia.

Discuss how the Dutch introduced batik to Europe and the impact this introduction had on the art and fashion worlds of Europe in the early 1900’s.

Educate visitors about the reasons behind disappearance of batik in the Europe due to the end of Art Nouveau and the onset of the Great Depression and where that has left batik today.
Takeaways from Educational Objectives

Batiks can be defined by a cracking pattern created by dye settling into cracks in the wax. Also visible in some cases are the layers of dye on top of one another due to multiple dips in dye baths of different colors. Different processes are used to create batik and the variations in technique seem to occur by region rather than individual preference. The imagery on the batik can give a clue to where the batik was created and how stories (like fairytales) were passed along from one country to another (Little Red Riding Hood was a common story on Indonesian batiks at the turn of the 20th century).

Batik most likely originated in India, although it is possible that it was native to several islands and countries in Southeast Asia. The process of batik made its way across Asia through the textile trade which was dominated by India.

Between the English controlling the exports of India and the Dutch controlling the exports of several islands and countries in Southeast Asia the pre-existing textile trade dominated by India was destroyed. It became harder for the natives of Southeast Asian countries to afford the new prices and taxes on textiles so many countries began to make their own batiks. Batik was most likely introduced to Africa through the port cities that the English and Dutch created in order to rest and stock up on their way to and from Asia.
Takeaways from Educational Objectives (Continued)

Batiks were donated to museums like the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam by expatriates living in Indonesia, merchants, or through museum sponsored expeditions. The museums then held workshops to teach artists how to create batiks. The public would see traditional batiks along with the work of the European artists at the Worlds Fair’s. Several textile factories, like Vlisco, were founded on the sole purpose of producing batik garments to sell in Europe and abroad. Batik garments became a symbol of high status because each garment is slightly different due to the batik process.

The batik style and technique were closed tied with Art Nouveau and began to fall out of fashion when the art movement ended. Then with the onset of the Great Depression the Dutch could no longer afford to take as many trips to Southeast Asia for goods and the rest of Europe could not afford the luxury of a one of a kind garment like batik. The Japanese also began to occupy many of the countries in Southeast Asia and took control of their exports. Today batik is still practiced in Southeast Asia and is one of the main selling points to visit these countries on travel webpages. Batik is still high fashion in Africa, particularly in the countries along the Gulf of Guinea.
Public Programming

There would be a website, or at least a webpage attached to the Sackler Gallery and the African Museum of Art.

Lectures and a symposium about batik could be held in the two museums. There is an International Batik Expo that is held every year, the location changes but it is always in Southeast Asia. The expo is meant to bring awareness to the history of batik and the ways in which it is currently being used and practiced. It would be inspiring to have some of the speakers from this expo come and speak, or even have viewings of the current expo in conjunction with the exhibition.

A section of the exhibit called ‘Make Your Own Batik’ will have a demonstrator constantly teaching the basics of batik while demonstrating wax, starch, hand drawn, and stamp methods of batik production. These lessons will also be available to visitors once or twice a week to sign up and create a batik that can then go home with them. There would also be a children’s version of this workshop. The children’s version uses white paper as the textile, and Elmer’s glue as the resist and tempera paint as the dye.
Primary Audience

The primary audience for this exhibition is in line with typical art museum visitors that both the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the National Museum of African Art draw. These visitors typically include a higher percentage of females than males, they are middle aged with at least a bachelor’s degree and the majority of the visitors have higher degrees. The National Museum of African Art draws in a higher percentage of African American visitors than the typical art museum; in contrast, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery does not draw in a higher percentage of Asian American visitors than the typical art museum. The visitors tend to linger longer on each label and are truly passionate about the topics related to these cultures. Hopefully these visitors will have some previous knowledge of batik or the cultures that are highlighted in this exhibition.

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Office of Policy and Analysis, “An Analysis of Existing Data on Visitors to the Freer and Sackler Galleries,” Smithsonian Institution (2007), https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:1zQqfnbLldcj:www.si.edu/content/opanda/docs/Rpts2007/07.11.FSGVisitors2007.Final.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESiu21qUp4W-AjY8g2W16Ynn2vTn56vqPKxXYHuPG5hDpNfbQQTCRbwprLppPOytn6pPAf8iW7oOzMe89OOOjn36UMqv yskb4_hT-4SA8lelm0NcXi-vqmuqQbboSmV5meT3xTC&sig=AHIEtbTal5IeoVIQXBrQ-GvU2_33-I3EhA.
Secondary Audience

The secondary audience would be the more general tourist visitor to the Smithsonian Institution Museums. These visitors are out-of-town tourists looking to see their countries’ treasures that are housed within the Smithsonian Institution. The exhibition will be accessible to visitors who are not familiar with batik and will give these visitors enough knowledge to walk away feeling like he/she better understands the topic. The draw for this audience will be in the marketing and posters created and displayed on the mall and online.
CHAPTER 4

Venue

The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and National Museum of African Art

Freer and Sackler mission statement:

“As Smithsonian museums, the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery hold in trust the nation’s extraordinary collections of Asian art and of American art of the late nineteenth-century aesthetic movement. Our mission is to encourage enjoyment and understanding of the arts of Asia and the cultures that produced them. We use works of art to inspire study and provoke thought.”

National Museum of African Art mission statement:

“The Smithsonian’s National Museum of African Art fosters the discovery and appreciation of the visual arts of Africa, the cradle of humanity.”

---

Venue (Continued)

Both museums are easily accessible by Metrorail and Metrobus. The Smithsonian Metro stop is located on Independence Ave next to the Freer Gallery and just a four minute walk from both the Sackler Gallery and African Art. There are several Metrobus stops around the mall, right in front of the gates to the Haupt Garden is a bus stop for lines 13G, 16F, 907, 909 and 922 (Fig. 3).
The existing buildings for both of these museums opened on the National Mall in 1987. They were designed by Architect Jean-Paul Carlhian. He created entry spaces for each museum in the Haupt Garden located behind the Castle, and connected the two museums underground on three sublevels.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
Venue (Continued)

The galleries that will be used for this exhibition on batiks are located on sublevel one at the bottom of the grand staircases in the atriums of both buildings, and the connecting galleries between the two museums (currently Shadow Sites in Sackler and Walt Disney Tishman Collection in African Art). The total area of these galleries is approximately 7,083 sq. ft. with varying ceiling heights; the mezzanine in Sackler is 11’ 7”, the mezzanine in African Art is 14’, Shadow Sites is currently 13’, Disney Tishman is 12’ 10”, and the connecting space between Shadow Sites and Disney Tishman is 7’.
Exhibit Story: Textiles and Early Batik

Batiks are an ancient form of textile decoration that predates the written word. Therefore there are several theories about the origins of batik. Some scholars believe batik originated in India and spread through trade, others believe batik could have originated in several different countries like Peru, China, Syria or Egypt. While another group of scholars believe that batik was practiced in all of these countries simultaneously. Meanwhile, origination in India is the most common belief because India has had the longest history with decorating textiles. There is no way for scholars to know for sure since batik textiles were produced as clothing items and were not preserved. The earliest surviving textiles have been found in Egypt.5

Indus Valley

Textile production began in the second millennium BCE in the Indus Valley.\(^6\) This was documented by the discovery of the earliest textile fragment from the Mohenjo Daro settlement located in the Indus Valley. This fragment is mordant-dyed cotton and has been radiocarbon dated to 1760 BCE +/- 115 years.\(^7\)

Coptic Textiles

We know that the Greeks had established a textile trade with India by the 1st century CE by the mention of Indian textiles in the writings of Stabo\(^8\) and in *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (unknown author but was written in Ancient Greek)\(^9\).

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\(^8\) Benjamin, *The World of Rozome*, 57.

\(^9\) Alphen, *A Passage to Asia*, 183.
Kertch Cloth

The now titled Kertch Cloth (Fig. 5) was found draped over a sarcophagus at the Tombs of the Seven Brothers with is near Kertch, Crimea. The cloth is dated to the 4th century BCE and is believed to be created using a liquid wax resist process. The imagery on the textile includes mythological scenes similar to those on Greek vases and ornamental decorations like waves and meanders.10

Fustat, Egypt

The largest collection of ancient textiles fragments were found in Fustat, Egypt in waste disposal sites and graves. 2,000 fragments were found in Fustat and radiocarbon dating has placed the earliest fragments to the 10th century CE with the majority ranging from the 11th century to the 15th century. These textile fragments are believed to be of Indian origin because they are similar to known textiles from Gujarat and it is known that India was trading with Egypt during this time period.11

11 Barnes, *Trade, Temple & Court*, 12.
Traditional Indonesian Batik

The earliest documentation we have of batiks existing in Indonesia can be found on Hindu and Buddhist sculptures primarily from the 9th century to the 11th century CE. These statues are wearing garments decorated with flowers and circles which are usually organized by bands running horizontally around the garment. The organization of images in between bands is an early batik style.¹²

The traditional technique used to create batik is called Tulis, which means the design is hand drawn in wax on the fabric. The pattern is usually drawn on the fabric before the wax is applied. The Tulis worker then dips her canting (bamboo stick with a metal needle on one end, Fig. 6) in a bowl of wax and traces over her pattern with the canting. The wax is applied to both sides of the fabric before it is dipped in a dye bath (usually indigo). The fabric is then dried and either dipped in boiling water to remove the wax, or the wax is scraped off and a new layer of wax is applied to a new pattern and it is dipped in another dye bath to add a new color to the fabric.

The Tulis technique is usually completed by women and it can take up to a week to create one batik cloth.¹³

Traditional Indian Batik

Resist dyeing in India is done with wax, gum, rice paste, resin, starch or mud and applied with a pen, brush or a stencil. Depending on the resist method used the fabric is either immersed in a cold or boiling bath, ironed or even brushed in order to remove the resisting agent after dyeing the fabric.14

Traditional Chinese Batik

Batik was introduced in China sometime between the Qin (221-206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE – 8 CE) Dynasties.15 Chinese batik was created with insect wax, beeswax or pine resin. The wax was either painted on the surface of the fabric or applied to the surface with a copper knife. Once the wax hardened the fabric was dipped in dye (usually indigo), and then would be boiled to remove the wax. Occasionally the fabric was crumpled into a ball before being dyed so the wax would crack and the dye would produce a ‘cracked ice’ effect on the textile.16

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) batik became popular again but only blue (indigo) and white batik.17

Traditional Japanese Batik

Wax resist dyeing has been practiced in Japan since the Nara Period (710-794 CE).\(^{18}\) The process most likely came to Japan through trade with China during China’s Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE).\(^{19}\)

The largest repository of ancient wax-resist textiles in Japan was found at the Todaiji Temple in Nara inside the Shosoin storehouse. The majority of the textiles found there were created for the dedication of the Great Buddha statue by Emperor Abdicant Shomu in 752 CE. The wax-resist textiles found there consisted of costumes, ritual banners, and many fragments.\(^{20}\)

Silk was the most popular fabric used for wax-resist in Japan during the Nara period. The wax was applied directly to the silk by wooden stamps. The most common pattern at the time was a floral latticework pattern with birds and fish (Fig. 7).\(^{21}\)

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19 Ibid., 74.
20 Ibid., 75-77.
21 Ibid., 80-81.
Exhibit Story: Founding of the VOC (Vereenigde Oost-indische Compagnie)

The Dutch East India Company or Vereenigde Oost-indische Compagnie in Dutch (VOC for short and was also the monogram that was stamped on their goods) was founded in 1602. The founding of the VOC was meant to further increase Dutch independence from Spain and also to protect the Dutch trade routes in the East Indies.\textsuperscript{22}

Establishment of the Dutch East India Company

The Dutch started sailing to Indonesia in 1596 in search of spices; Indonesia was known for their cloves, nutmeg and mace. The first Dutch port city was at Banten in West Java to export spices and eventually textiles. The British quickly took over the port city so the Dutch moved to the North Coast of Java and established Batavia in 1619. Batavia become the central port for the VOC textile trade in 1628 when Governor-General Jan Pietersz Coen banned non-VOC textile trading in Maluku and Solor.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{23} Guy, *Woven Cargoes*, 78-79.
Establishment of the Dutch East India Company (Continued)

By 1700 the VOC had established a textile warehouse at Castle Batavia. The warehouse held between 500,000 and 1,000,000 pieces at any given time. The textiles were only sold at auction or to licensed VOC traders. All the textiles that passed through Batavia were stamped with the VOC logo that way the VOC could ensure that their exclusive trading rights in the Dutch East Indies were being enforced.\textsuperscript{24}

Shutting-down India Trade Routes

India had been trading with Egypt and Greece since antiquity as noted earlier, but the most productive trade routes were between India and the Asian Archipelago. Indian merchants began trading cloth for spices sometime before the 14\textsuperscript{th} century (the century when this trade started is unknown but the earliest textile fragments in the Asian Archipelago date back to the 14\textsuperscript{th} century). These trade routes were well established by the time the Europeans began to sail to the Indian Ocean in search of spices.\textsuperscript{25}

The establishment of the VOC and the British East India Company began to interfere with the pre-established Indian trade routes. The VOC took control of the spice trade in the Asian Archipelago and the British East India Company took control of the textiles exported from India which made the cost of these goods too expensive for the indigenous populations.

\textsuperscript{24} Guy, \textit{Woven Cargoes}, 81-82.
\textsuperscript{25} Alphen, \textit{A Passage to Asia}, 184.
Shutting-down India Trade Routes (Continued)

These two countries were also producing roller printed copies of the textiles produced in India and Indonesia and started to sell them to the indigenous populations for cheaper prices than the textiles being produced by hand in their own countries. This further disrupted the production of textiles in South-East Asia.  

Colonizing Indonesia

As the Dutch began to colonize Indonesia more and more Dutch citizens moved to the islands for government business. These expatriates began to use batiks in their homes as decorations and functional items like wall hangings and tablecloths. Dutch expatriates living in Indonesia did not wear batik clothes out in public but saved the batiks for leisure wear. Women wore the traditional sarong (tubular skirt) with a white kebaya (button up shirt) while men wore celana (pants) with their kebaya. The white kebaya was worn to indicate European status, meaning a natural born European woman, a babu (nanny) for a European family or Indonesian mistresses to a European man were the only members of Indonesian society that wore white kebaya.

26 Alphen, A Passage to Asia, 185-186.
Colonizing Indonesia (Continued)

Dutch officials living or visiting Indonesia often received batiks from the Indonesian government because batiks are considered a highly valued gift. The Dutch began to get involved with the local government and encouraged the Indonesian royals to find ways to show rank (Fig. 8). Consequently a code to batik designs and colors was created that distinguished different courts, as well as identify the commoners and foreigners. For example reds were not allowed in the court of Mataram only deep brown batiks were acceptable, which means that these batiks were only produced in Central Java. Batiks produced on the coasts for export to the Dutch and Chinese often included red. Commoners usually wore blue and black batik and only for ceremonial purposes. By the sixteenth century batik was the official dress of the courts, state officials and the military. Specific patterns were used to show rank which means a promotion in rank came with new regalia. This lead to the courts forbidding certain patterns of batik except for those created for the royal family or their officials.

Figure 8

28 Dartel, Collectors Collected, 30.
29 Justine Boow, Symbol and Status in Javanese Batik (Nedlands, WA, Australia: Asian Studies Centre, University of Western Australia, 1988), 63.
30 Ibid., 63.
Introduction of new Imagery to Indonesian Batik

Early European attempts at batik textiles were created in an effort to increase trade between Indonesia and Europe. These early European batiks often included traditional Indonesian imagery such as the Wayang (a shadow puppet used to tell stories), birds, butterflies and tendril like foliage. As the European textile designers began to perfect the technique they started to include more western imagery like lace borders and art deco inspired forms.31

Chinese Imagery

There is a long history of Chinese immigrants settling in Indonesia since the two countries are so close to one another geographically. The two cultures started to assimilate during the Ming Dynasty in China (1368-1644 CE) when females were not allowed to leave China. This forced males immigrating to Indonesia to marry and settle down with Indonesian women, particularly along the North Coast of Java.32

Chinese Imagery (Continued)

Some Chinese imagery started to appear because of the melding of these two cultures. Geometric motifs include the swastika (a Buddhist symbol), and the coin, which is usually made of silver, jade or gold and worn as a protection symbol. The coin would be printed on fabric as a circle often with a dragon enclosed in it. Most of the Chinese motifs brought over to Indonesia are animal motifs. These include the dragon, phoenix, turtle (Fig. 9), centipede and fish.\(^{33}\)

European Imagery

European imagery that was introduced in Indonesia at this time was the bouquet of flowers (Indonesian flowers are usually seen as a single bloom in a field of tendrils), lace borders and popular stories like Fairy Tales. Also introduced at this time were aniline dyes, only natural dyes were available before the Dutch colonization of Indonesia.\(^{34}\)

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India had been the main producer and exporter of batiks until the late 19th century when the Indonesian workshops on the North Coast of Java were established and surpassed the production of Indian batiks.\(^{35}\)

These workshops were established by several women of mixed ethnic origins with the intention of creating Indo-European designs to be traded with the Dutch and other European Nations. Several of the most famous workshops were owned by Carolina von Fraquemont, Lien Metzelaar and Eliza van Zuylen. The batiks created by these workshops were referred to as Batik Belanda or Dutch Batik and feature flowers arranged in bouquets rather than tendrils, lace borders instead of straight borders, and some pictorial scenes of western stories, like fairytales.

The most defining feature of these works were the signatures, up until this time it was not custom to sign your designs, but not a single batik left these workshops without a signature.\(^{36}\)


Rise of Workshops (Continued)

The workshops were also looking for faster ways to produce textiles to keep up with the demand from the Chinese and Dutch so they invented the cap, or copper stamp (Fig. 10). This method is based off the European block printing method of fabric design. The first caps or stamps were made from wood or tubers, but both materials did not last long being dipped in the hot wax, so eventually the copper cap was invented. The cap is dipped in the hot wax and then stamped on the fabric. The rest of the batik process is the same except twenty batiks could be created in a day rather than the one batik in a week, but the process was no longer done by women. The cap method was considered dirty work and was done by men.37

Downfall of the Royals

Two of the most powerful courts with the greatest rivalry are the courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta.38 With the influence of the Dutch the courts decreed several batik patterns as forbidden to anyone that wasn’t of royal blood. These sacred batiks were created by aristocratic women for the royal family. The sacred patterns started to show up on the North Coast of Java with the establishment of the workshops.39

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37 Gillow, *Traditional Indonesian textiles*, 41 & 44.
39 Inger McCabe Elliott, *Batik, fabled cloth of Java* (Singapore: Periplus, 2004), 64-68.
Downfall of the Royals (Continued)

The availability of these patterns is attributed to a couple of different factors. First the Dutch control over the textile imports to Indonesia pushed the price of Indian cloth out of range for the common Indonesian so many people were forced to start making their own batik, which is why the aristocratic women of the courts started creating batik.40

The second factor was the 18th century downfall of the Mataram Kingdom (a Hindu-Buddhist Kingdom). The courts were deeply rooted in the Hindu-Buddhist traditions and were weakened when the dominant faith of the island of Java disintegrated.41 This was due to the introduction of Islam in the 16th century and the introduction of Christianity by the Dutch.42

Carolina von Fraquemont

Carolina von Fraquemont opened the first European-influenced batik workshop in 1845 along the North Coast of Java.43 Her workshop was known for the creation of a natural green dye and so it was named Fraquemont Green. Fraquemont was just the beginning of the Batik Belanda movement and she paved the way for other women.44

41 Ibid., 98-99.
42 Elliott, *Batik, fabled cloth of Java*, 80-81.
Lien Metzelaar

Lien Metzelaar had a workshop in Pekalongan from 1880 to 1920 and was defined by her floral borders and depictions of fairy tales. One of her most famous batiks recreates the story of Red Riding Hood (Fig. 11), fairytales were very popular imagery to recreate in batik for the Batik Belanda artists.45

Figure 11

Eliza van Zuylen

Eliza van Zuylen's workshop was the most famous of all the Batik Belanda workshops. Her workshop was founded in 1890 in Pekalongan and lasted until 1946. The characteristics of her batiks are bright colors, floral patterns arranged in bouquets and birds.46 Zuylen's workshop was known for using bright colored aniline dyes. These bright colored batiks ended up being more popular with the Chinese women living in and visiting Indonesia at the time (Fig. 12). The more subdued batiks with a mixture of traditional dyes like indigo and the new aniline dyes (mostly red) were more popular with the European women.47

Figure 12

45 Harper, Javanese and Sumatran Batiks from Courts and Palaces, 18.
47 Harper, Javanese and Sumatran Batiks from Courts and Palaces, 18.
Other Workshops

Many of the workshops in Pekalongan were established by male Chinese immigrants and produced batiks with more Chinese influences rather than European. For examples these workshops tended to use colors that are found in Chinese ceramics like yellows, blues, pinks and greens.48

Oye Soe Tjoen was a male run workshop that opened in 1901 and is still open today. Their specialty is tulis or hand drawn batik (Fig. 13).49

Phoa Tjong Ling was a male run workshop in Pekalongan that specialized in tulis batik.50

The Tie Set was founded in Pekalongan in the 1920's by a Chinese male. The workshop specialized in tulis batik (Fig. 14) until the 1950's when it's founder died and his children took over and started creating cap or stamped batiks.51

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48 Kerlogue, Batik, 24.
49 Troepenmuseum (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Batik: Drawn in Wax: 200 Years of Batik Art from Indonesia in the Troepenmuseum Collection (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2001), 191.
50 Ibid., 193.
51 Kerlogue, Batik, 115.
Batik in Africa

While tie-dye has been practiced in Africa for centuries batik was only introduced to Africa recently and wasn’t practiced by the indigenous population until the 1900’s.\textsuperscript{52}

Black Dutchmen

There are a couple of different theories about how batik came to Africa. One theory is that when the Dutch stopped along the Golden Coast on their return trips from Indonesia they traded some of the batiks to the local people for supplies.\textsuperscript{53} The secondary theory is the Black Dutchmen brought batiks back to Africa with them when their service was over. The Black Dutchmen were 3,000 African soldiers that were recruited for the Dutch colonial army in Indonesia between the years of 1831 and 1872. All of the recruits signed a contract and when that contract was up the soldier had the choice of returning to Africa or settling in Indonesia. It is believed that the soldiers that decided to return to Africa brought batiks back with them and told the stories of the batik process.\textsuperscript{54}

Vlisco

Pieter Fentener van Vlissingen founded Vlisco on August 15th, 1846 in Helmond, Holland. Vlisco was originally founded as a textile manufacturer that would produce hand printed fabrics and then sell them both in Holland and overseas. By 1852 Vlisco had begun exporting their textiles to Indonesia and by 1876 Vlisco was shipping prints to Africa. With the rise of the workshops on the North Coast of Java in 1900 Vlisco was forced out of Indonesia so their core market was switched to Africa. Studies were done to test the market in Africa and determine what colors and prints would appeal most to the indigenous people. In 1910 Vlisco starting using a wax printing machine to increase productivity.55

ABC (A. Brunnschweiler and Co.)

ABC was founded in 1812 as a typical printed textile manufacturer but by 1908 the company was creating wax prints for export to Africa.56 ABC was only using indigo to print wax fabrics for export to Africa up until fifteen years ago (Fig. 15).57

Figure 15

Early Yoruba Batik

The resist-dye method similar to batik practiced by the Yoruba women in Nigeria is called adire eleko. Adire eleko is created by painting or stamping a pattern on the fabric with starch made from cassava flour. The earliest adire eleko designs mimicked adire oniko which is a form of tie-dye using raffia. The majority of the textiles created are signed by the artist; the signature is located on the bottom edge of the fabric where it is turned up into the hem and only visible from the inside of the garment.\(^{58}\)

The cassava flour is mixed with alum and copper sulphate. These two chemicals are only used to give the cassava flour a blue color so it is easier to see the pattern as it is applied to the fabric. Hand drawn patterns were created with either chicken feathers, sticks, palm leaf ribs or a comb. While stamped patterns were traditionally created with a lead and leather stamp but now mostly zinc and iron sheeting are used to create stamps.\(^{59}\)

Just like Indonesian batik, painting is done by women and stamping is done by men. The women usually work outside when they are painting their patterns on the cloth to show off their skills and technique. Often the hand drawn patterns are handed down from mother to daughter and haven’t changed much over time. The stamping is done indoors and usually produces designs that are less detailed and repeated more often.\(^{60}\)

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Yoruba Batik and Textile Factories

With the construction of textile factories in Western Africa it was feared that local traditions like adire eleko would be lost. Just like the rest of the world the technique was lost at the onset of WWII but in the 1960’s adire eleko came back into fashion in Africa. The Yoruba women started to buy commercially printed textiles and print their adire eleko patterns on top of the factory prints (Fig. 16).  

Batik in Europe

Batiks came into the collections of Netherlandish museums, like the Colonial Museum in Haarlem, through three ways, museum hired expeditions to collect artifacts from the Dutch colony, merchants looking for a side business, and individual collectors that lived in the colony and bequeathed their collections to the museum.62

Around 1900 the Colonial Museum in Haarlem began to send researchers to document the processes of batik. The researchers at the Colonial Laboratorium at Haarlem (not part of the Colonial Museum but the two organizations collaborated on a regular basis) used this information to study the dyes and dyes processes to perfect the batik process for climate conditions in Europe, this new process was called 'Nederlandsche batik' (Dutch batik).63

63 Ibid., 13.
Workshops in Museums

The Colonial Laboratorium produced a free brochure called ‘Vlugblad’ which explained the ‘Nederlandsche batik’ method. The brochure was first introduced at the Kneuterdijk Palace exhibition entitled ‘East Indian Fabrics, Javanese Batiks and Old Furniture’. The Colonial Laboratorium continued to update the brochure as new advancements were created and passed out the brochure at all Colonial Museum exhibitions that included batiks.64

Artists wanting to learn the ‘Nederlandsche batik’ process were invited to come and study at the Colonial Laboratorium. One of the first artists to study the batik process at the Laboratorium was Chris Lebeau.65

Production for Export

Rotterdam, Haarlem and Helmond were the locations of the largest Dutch batik producing factories at the turn of the 20th century. The majority of these batiks were exported to India and Indonesia but a few made their way into the European markets. The patterns on the exported textiles were specifically tailored to the target market.66

64 Maria Wronska-Friend, “Javanese batik for European artists: Experiments at the Koloniaal Laboratorium in Haarlem,” in Batik: Drawn in Wax: 200 Years of Batik Art from Indonesia in the Tropenmuseum Collection, ed. Itie van Hout (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2001), 117.
65 Ibid., 119.
1900 & 1925 Paris Exhibition

Batik became an inspiration for artists that were part of the *Art Nouveau* movement. By the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts in Paris batiks were a global phenomenon. The majority of the countries participating in the 1925 Paris Exposition were showing batiks.

Batik in Germany

The first introduction of batiks in Germany came in 1903 at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum with the Dutch Art Exhibition. This introduction to batiks spurred interest in the German art community and art schools began adding batik production to their curriculums. A notable batik artist Johan Thorn Prikker was appointed to teach the batik technique at the local art school in Krefeld, Germany.  

Batik didn’t become a notable art form in Germany until after the 1906 Dutch East Indian Art Exhibition at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum. The 1906 exhibition was a great success and drew in more visitors than any other exhibition had previously. “At the same time it was mentioned that batik dyeing “in Europe would initially remain an art form for the rich”, to be practiced by experienced artists.”

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67 Dartel, *Collectors Collected*, 23.
69 Ibid., 21-22.
70 Ibid., 21.
Batik in Germany (Continued)

In 1908 Oskar Haebler founded Textile Kunst und Industrie, a monthly journal which claimed to be the, “only voice of the entire industry of textiles, wall paper and related arts that represents purely their creative interests.” Many of the articles in the monthly journal feature German batik artists and their works.

Batik in Poland

Batiks hit their height in popularity in Poland from 1913-1925 with the founding of the Krakow Workshops. These workshops encouraged artists and artisans to work together and exchange skill sets. The supervisor, Antoni Buszek, of the Batik Atelier, a division of the Krakow Workshop, modeled his studio after Paul Poiret. Buszek hired uneducated teenage girls to study Javanese batiks and draw their own impressions of the designs. The girls designs were represented in the Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Milan in 1923 and the Batik Atelier team received the Grand Prix award at the 1925 International Decorative Arts Exhibition in Paris. Individual Grand Prix's were awarded to Zofia Kogut, Józefa Kogut and Franciszka Delkowska.

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71 Ibid., 23.
72 Muzeum Sztuki i Techniki Japońskiej manggha (Kraków, Poland), Niezwykłe Spotkania: Jawajski Batik W Krakowie (Kraków: Muzeum Sztuki i Techniki Japońskiej manggha, 2007), 22-23.
Batik in Poland (Continued)

The Polish batik artists favored the typical Javanese patterns like the elongated diamond, the lung-lungan style (Fig. 17) which “featured fantastic birds among blossoming tree branches or plant tendrils,” and the blue and brown color schemes from the use of natural dyes.73

The Polish artists not only used the batik style of decorating for textiles they also used it in other media like wood, metal and ceramics. The wax resist process was still used on these other forms of media but the dyes were changed depending on the surface they were being applied to.74

73 Muzeum Sztuki i Techniki Japońskiej manggha (Kraków, Poland), Niezwykłe Spotkania: Jawajski Batik W Krakowie (Kraków: Muzeum Sztuki i Techniki Japońskiej manggha, 2007), 22-23.
74 Ibid., 23-24.
Lion Cachet

Lion Cachet was the first artist to experiment with batik on parchment. Cachet created a couple of different book covers for an exhibition on the portraits of the royal Dutch family; both covers are for the same exhibition Cachet just decided to try a couple different color ways. Both books also have the iconic whiplash line from Art Nouveau (Fig. 18).\(^7^5\)

Johan Thorn Prikker

Johan Thorn Prikker not only experimented with batik in textiles, but he included it in marquetry and furniture. Prikker is known for combining the whiplash line along with the Celtic knot (hallmarks of the Art Nouveau style) with white outlines and the crackling effect inherent in batik.\(^7^6\)

Chris Lebeau

Chris Lebeau created several batiks based on traditional imagery particularly traditional batik imagery from Cirebon (there are a lot of fish and ocean life batiks from Cirebon). He also used the traditional natural dyes indigo and soga (from a Soga Tree). The crackling in the dyes is an added feature for the western market. Some of his batik designs were also Art Nouveau Inspired like Prikker and Cachet, for example a book cover for a book about the East Indies (Fig. 19).  

Chris Lebeau was a lecturer for the Applied Art School in Haarlem from 1904-1912.

Marguerite Pangon

The first batik textile designer to be called a batik artist was Marguerite Pangon French. French learned the batik technique in the Netherlands in 1905. After her training was complete she returned to France and started to make her own unique batik fabrics. She decided that all her designs would be made on velvet and would be of French imagery, that way she was elevating the art rather than just copying what the Indonesians did like her predecessors.

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Marguerite Pangon (Continued)

One of her most famous works is a velvet panel of parasols (Fig. 20). This panel shows the crackling pattern that is beloved by Europeans, but also includes contemporary imagery of French parasols. Marguerite showed a couple of her batik panels at the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts in Paris.  

Fashion

After the 1906 Dutch East Indian Art Exhibition in Krefeld it became popular for German woman to take courses in the batik process and to open up clothing boutiques featuring their designs. European batik clothing was only produced for women in the form of dresses and usually had high necklines which were adorned with green stone necklaces.  

80 Troy, The modernist textile, 105 & 107.
81 Fleischmann-Heck, Batik: 75 Selected Masterpieces, 25.
Batik Legacy

Batik had a resurgence in the 1960’s along with the popularity of tie-dye. It is still produced today in Asia and Africa and even appears on the runway in some countries.

Contemporary Indonesia

Today tourists can buy both hand-drawn and printed batiks. Some workshops are open to tourists and they can walk through and see the process for themselves. According to an Indonesian tourist website there are a few workshops in Yogyakarta that will create custom made batiks for tourists.82

Locals still wear batik day to day but there are other clothing options. Batik is more common as clothing in smaller outlying towns rather than the big cities.83

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83 Elliott, *Batik, fabled cloth of Java*, 194.
Contemporary Africa

Vlisco and ABC are still around today but they are only producing wax prints for Africa.

Vlisco is still one of the largest producers of wax prints and is part of the high fashion market in Western Africa. Like all major manufacturers Vlisco has been having problems with Chinese counterfeits of their designs. To combat the problem the company has decided to create collections that are available for a limited amount of time.84

ABC now produces and sells their wax prints exclusively in Africa. They moved their factory to Ghana in 2005 and closed their last factory in Manchester in 2007.85

Contemporary China & Japan

Batik was used to make some clothing in China and Japan but it was never the dominant form of clothing like it was in Indonesia. Batik is still practiced in these two countries today but it is only in isolated locations mostly for tourism or in the form of art. The people living south of the Yangtze River in China create Blue Calico and sell it in the local markets or online.86 Several Japanese batiks created by local craftsmen can be found on online galleries.

84 Melinda Ozongwu, “African wax material: All the rage, but where’s the money going?” This is Africa: Africa for a new generation (2012), http://www.thisisafrica.me/visual-arts/detail/19420/African-wax-material%3A-All-the-rage,-but-where%27s-the-money-going%3F.
The Batik Guild

In 1986 a group of batik artists founded the Batik Guild. The bulk of the members are in Britain and Ireland but membership is growing. The Batik Guild’s mission is, “to promote and improve education in the field of batik, and encourages and supports its members as individual artists or craftspeople.”

Fashion

Africa is not the only country where batik is considered high fashion. Jakarta hosted its 4th annual Jakarta Fashion Week last February and there were many designers showing batik on the runway. Some of the Indonesian designers showing batik were Dee Ong, Defrico Audy, Ian Adrian, Ida Royani and Lulu Lutfi Labibi.

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Yinka Shonibare

Yinka Shonibare is a London born artist. His family moved to Lagos, Nigeria when Shonibare was three. He returned to London to attend the Byam Shaw College of Art and later completed his MFA at Goldsmiths College. Shonibares’ biography describes his work as an, “exploration of colonialism and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalization,” and in 2004 Shonibare received the high honor of being excepted as a member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his talents.89 Many of his works use Dutch wax prints that are sold in Africa (Fig. 21).

Exhibit Resources

There is a diverse collection of resources for Transcribing Dots. The resources include textiles, objects, photographs, maps, installation art, video and interactives.

Textiles will be the most prominent resources in the exhibition. The majority of the textiles will be *kain panjang* or hip wrappers because they are the most commonly collected batiks. There will also be textile fragments, clothing, head wrappers, table cloths, wall hangings, and upholstery fabrics.

Objects is a broad category that includes paintings, drawings, posters and all three dimensional objects. The three dimensional objects include statues, ceramics, tools for making batiks, puppets, books, and furniture.

Photographs and maps will be used throughout the exhibit to create more context for the visitor. Photographs will show how batiks are worn, made and used. Maps will help orient the visitor and make it easier for visitors to understand the differences in batik styles due to geographical location.
Installation art will be commissioned works from batik workshops in Indonesia, China, Japan and Africa. Commissioned works will be used a ceiling installation starting in the stairwells of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the National Museum of African Art and running through the entire exhibit.

There will be three videos and several interactives throughout the exhibition. The videos will show the process used to create batiks in Indonesia and Africa. There will be several touch screen interactives as well as some tactile interactives. Once touch screen interactive will teach the visitor what imagery comes from what country. There will also be several touch screens that allow the visitors to ‘flip’ through the pages of the books that are on display. The tactile interactives will be made of different compositions of wax and starch so visitors can feel the differences in the texture and understand how these differences can create different patterns.
Visitor Experience

Entrance:

Immediately upon entering either the Sackler Gallery or the National Museum of African Art the visitor will see a changing exhibition of contemporary batik artists. The artists displayed in African Art will be by contemporary batik artists from Africa or with African roots like Yinka Shonibare and the contemporary artists displayed in the Sackler will be either Asian or European like members of the Batik Guild or batik promotional products used to promote batik production in Indonesia. The visitor will learn about these artists and why they use batik as their medium for creating art. These works will be displayed in the open space on the ground floor between the entrance and the stairs down to the first sublevel (purple space on the attached Visitor Experience Plan).

There will also be an installation of batiks along the ceiling of the same space; the installed batiks will flow down the staircase (red on the floorplan) to lead the visitor to the actual exhibit on sublevel 1.
CHAPTER 12

Entrance (Continued)

These installed batiks will be commissioned from contemporary batik craftspeople from Indonesia, China, Japan and Africa. This installation will not separate the batiks by country, the batiks will flow freely, intertwining with one another and dancing down the staircases. The installation will continue throughout the exhibition as a ceiling treatment but it will be a little more subdued. Then other design elements like my graphics and timeline can flow down from the ceiling and back up again at key moments in the exhibition.

Textiles and Early Batik:

The introduction to the exhibit will be in the mezzanine at the bottom of the stairs in the Sackler Gallery (forest green on the floorplan). Here the visitor will be introduced to the history of textiles and where batiks are believed to fit into this history.

This will be done with an illuminated map etched on the back of a circular glass case holding textile fragments and statues (Fig. 22). The text panels will explain the production of cotton textiles in the Indus Valley starting in 1,999 BCE, discuss the possibility of batiks being used to wrap mummies and the evidence that the Greeks were importing textiles from India.  

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90 Barnes, Trade, Temple & Court, 13.
Textiles and Early Batik (Continued):

I want to make it clear to the visitor that the history of textiles is a recent exploration and one that is difficult to study since textiles break down very quickly when exposed to the elements.91

This section will also introduce the origins of batiks in China, Japan and Indonesia; including the traditional patterns and techniques used by these countries.92

The objects in the introduction will include maps, images of objects that are either too delicate to display or have been lost since they were photographed, some fragments of textiles, portable Hindu and Buddhist statues that show batik patterning, traditional batiks, the tools used to create the batiks and videos (with audio and subtitles) that show the traditional process of creating Indonesian Tjap batik.93 This section will be smaller with greater emphasis on the early batik traditions rather than the history of textiles which is just to give the visitor a little background information.

91  Benjamin, *The World of Rozome*, 57.
CHAPTER 12

Founding of the VOC:

This section starts in 1602 with the establishment of the Dutch East India Company. The visitor will then learn how the existing trade routes between India and the Far East were destroyed and the impact that had on the textile production in Southeast Asia.

This section will also introduce the impact expatriates had on the culture of Indonesia as they began to colonize the country (the orange portion of the visitor experience plan).

The objects in this section will include maps of the VOC trade routes, pictures of the Indonesia court in full batik dress, and batiks that show the different symbols for each royal family. This will be one of the larger sections of the exhibition since it is a crucial point in the history of batik (Fig. 23).

94 “Dutch East India Company (Dutch Trading Company) -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia.”
95 Alphen, A passage to Asia, 184.
96 Dartel, Collectors Collected, 16-18.
Rise of Workshops:

Beginning at the turn of the 20th century woman began to set up workshops on the North Coast of Java and started to produce batiks with “Western” imagery to sell to the Dutch (pink portion of the visitor experience plan).97 Visitors will learn how these attempts to sell to the Dutch started to change the traditional imagery of batik from local to more global imagery. For example: Chinese dragons and phoenix’s were introduced as well as fairy tales like Little Red Riding Hood.98 This section will also discuss the new methods of producing batiks that were created to speed up the process like the cap.99

The objects in this section will be batiks with influences from Europe, China, Japan and India, the new tools to produce batiks, and video of the new stamping technique (again with audio and subtitles) that was invented to speed up the production of batik. This section will be the largest and is a crucial turning point in the history of batiks. These workshops started the global batik imagery and trends that are left over today (Fig. 24).

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98 Ibid.
99 Gillow, *Traditional Indonesian Textiles*, 41 & 44.
Chapter 12

Batik in Africa:

Visitors will learn the myths behind the introduction of batik in Africa and how difficult it is for historians to research these myths (transitioning between Sackler and African Art in the light blue portion of the visitor experience plan). This section will include traditional African batiks along with the introduction of Vlisco, the Dutch ‘Real Wax’ textile company, and some of their early batiks. This section will also discuss the rise of the textile factories in Africa and how those factories affected the local batik production.

The objects for this section will be batiks from the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria, early Vlisco batiks, images of the tools used by the Yoruba tribe to make batiks, video of their process, and factory made textiles that have been dyed over with batik (Fig. 25). This section will be smaller not because it is less important but because the history of batik production in Africa is so new and the majority of the contemporary batik trends occur here but will be discussed in a later portion of the exhibition.

Figure 25

Batik in Europe:

In this section visitors will learn about the batik trend in Europe, which was introduced around 1900 and quickly became a part of the Art Nouveau artistic movement.\textsuperscript{102} Visitors will be exposed to the various uses of batik in European art and textiles and the different ways that different countries explored the technique.\textsuperscript{103} This section will be in the yellow portion of the visitor experience plan but it will be in the African Art side of the exhibition. The section will end with an explanation of the disappearance of batik in Europe due to the Great Depression, the end of Art Nouveau and the emergence of new technologies.\textsuperscript{104}

The objects in this section will not only include batik panels from European artists, but chairs, vases, clothing, pictures, and a German batik screen (Fig. 26). This section will also be smaller because the batik trend in Europe was short lived and many of the artifacts no longer exist since this trend predated WWII.

\textsuperscript{102} Dartel, \textit{Collectors Collected}, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{103} Fleischmann-Heck, \textit{Batik: 75 Selected Masterpieces}, 23.
\textsuperscript{104} Troy, \textit{The Modernist Textile}, 32-35.
Batik Legacy:

Lastly visitors will be shown the state of batiks today (dark blue section on the floorplan). Batiks are still high fashion in parts of West Africa, and are still produced in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{105} 

The objects in this section will be contemporary batik fashions from Vlisco, Africa, Southeast Asia. This section will also direct visitors to the two temporary installations of contemporary batik art at the entrances to both museums and the flowing batik installation on the ceiling will direct visitors out of the exhibition and into the contemporary exhibition space at the entrance of the National Museum of African Art. This space will feel less like an art exhibition installation and more like a celebration of the lasting effects of batik. Since high fashion is part of the story of this space will be like a fashion show with mannequins, textiles hanging down from the ceiling, and video of models wearing batik on the runway (Fig. 27).

\textsuperscript{105} “Since 1846.”
CHAPTER 12

Visitor Experience Plan

Figure 28
CONCLUSION

Batik is an ancient form of textile decoration and does not show any signs of disappearing anytime in the near future. In fact there are glimpses of it coming back into fashion in the Western world. Hopefully we will see this ancient and beautiful art form back on the runway in the next few years.
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I began my research by reading books about Indonesian batiks and the culture in Indonesia. From my research on Indonesia I found the museum cataloge for the Tropenmuseums’ exhibition entitled *Batik: Drawn in Wax: 200 Years of Batik Art from Indonesia in the Tropenmuseum Collection*. This catalogue quickly became one of my primary resources and I began to search for more exhibition catalogues written for exhibits on batiks. Once I felt like I had collected enough bibliography on Indonesian batiks I moved on to researching the history of batiks and textiles in general.

The research of the history of batiks lead me to India, China and Japan. Again I looked at exhibition catalogues and books written about the topics of resist dyed textiles in these countries. I also began to look at museum websites at this point to see which museums held collections of batiks.

My next step was to research the Dutch East India Company and batik in Europe. This research was frustrating and lead to many dead ends. There are many journal articles written about batiks in Europe but very few survived WWII. I began to get frustrated with the topic and question if I should include batik in Europe or not because there are not many objects to show. Eventually I began to find objects and I think there are enough to go along with the articles I read to make this section worth including.
RESEARCH PLAN

From Europe I began to look into resist dye methods of decoration in Africa. This led me to books on the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria. There are many books talking about the Yoruba people but the sections on adire eleko (starch resist dye) are very limited. Piecing information together from several different books left me with enough information to create a section for Africa in the exhibition. The National Museum of African Art was also a helpful resource for finding African batiks.

The last bit of research I did was on contemporary batiks. This has definitely been the most difficult. Many of the places where batik is still practiced are poor areas and there are not many that have websites telling the public about their batiks. I did find a few websites and articles on fashion blogs about local fashion weeks.