Domestic

Artwork and designs for napkins and tablecloths
This Domestic themed book focuses on artwork, design sketches and drawings generated for the domestic market. There are hundreds of plates that record patterns for tablecloths and napkins in square, rectangular, oval and circular layouts. The diverse range of patterns provides insights into the artistic styles and visual themes that were popular over the period 1910 to 1970. The artistic talent and design skill of the individuals who produced the sketches, paintings and technical drawings for these household artefacts is remarkable. The William Liddell Collection provides a unique and fascinating insight not only into domestic tastes and trends but also the working practices of designers, technicians and weavers of the Irish linen industry.
Linen for homes

Styles & Influences

The William Liddell Collection contains a wide range of designs for home dining. Most of these designs are for napkins and tablecloths, however there are several designs for furnishing fabrics, most likely Damask brocades used for bedspreads [8-02-006] and curtains [1-11-013]. The range of designs in the collection evidences successive designers’ refined knowledge of aesthetic styles and influences throughout the 19th to 1970s. There are examples of designs developed in the neo-classical style with Greek urns and friezes, hanging garlands of flowers, festoons and rosettes in cameo format [8-11-004 & 3-02-005]. Realistic floras drawn in an accurate botanical illustrative style is one of the more common styles utilised [3-01-010, 1-05-017 & 1-05-012] another category developed from these floral designs is latticed florals [5-11-009 & 4-13-002], where ‘lattice templates’ are used as a basis for design development.
There is a small group of unusual painted abstract designs reminiscent of tree bark contours sculpted into linear and curvilinear forms [1-10-004, 1-10-006, 1-10-007 & 1-10-008]. Whilst some designs combine geometric borders and elements with flowing lines of foliage and flowers [1-04-001], others are starkly geometric [1-11-005]. There is also a stunning collection of designs based on Celtic knot work patterns where borders and central pieces are populated with intertwining lines, harps, crosses, castles, hounds and round towers [2-23-008 & 2-23-009]. Finally a remarkable collection of patterns influenced to varying degrees by a constructivist aesthetic [1-01-017]
Traces of talent

The designer sketches and painted drawings for floral designs display a keen eye for detail and highly skilled use of media to capture the visual themes of design work. Close inspection reveals a range of painting and drawing techniques [5-17-012, 4-12-005, 3-10-003]. The painstaking and precise painting of the final point paper design shows remarkable levels of endurance and patience [6-01-006].
Damask Dignity

The William Liddell Collection holds a stunning range of designs for napkin squares. Most designs show a section of the square that includes the corner, border and partial centre piece. Napkins that would eventually be folded and placed on dining tables across the world.

In 1926 American home economist Ethel R. Peyser, wrote a booklet for the William Liddell Company for the American domestic market that provides interesting insights into how Irish linen was regarded in the 1920s. The booklet was called Damask for Dignity and provides advice concerning etiquette in the use of Irish linen for entertaining and everyday use, place settings for breakfast, lunch and dinner, how to care for linen and also insights into the esteem in which the William Liddell Company itself was held.

Peyser writes:

‘Wherever Irish linen is mentioned, the name of Liddell comes to mind. For Wm. Liddell & Co. stands pre-eminent among linen makers today and has for the past century. The personnel of the Liddell Mills are as happy as any body of contented and efficient workers can be. Through the personal interest of Sir Robert Liddell there are excellent schools, football and cricket fields, recreation halls, and other pleasures for workers. For the American household owning Irish linen that was produced by workers from a community that were well cared for by the owner was significant and added to the regard that Liddell linen was held. Buying Irish Damask is not an expenditure, but an investment, for with it you add to your prestige, and to your comfort. And, as a table cover, it adds to the repast, what music does to an opera, nothing which will show to better advantage silver, glass and crystal, nothing that so charms as glistening white Damask, with its pattern catching the light and giving the essence of finish and life to the table.

Clearly the fine Irish linen that the William Liddell Company produced was highly esteemed and regarded as an indication of wealth, prestige and sophistication. Many families all over the world possess treasured tablecloths and napkin sets of Irish linen passed down through the generations, many of which have been woven in the Liddell factory in the village of Donacloney, County Down.’
DAMASK DIGNITIES

Lily of the Valley

Floral patterns drawn in an accurate botanical illustrative style are perhaps the most common in the domestic pattern category. Lily of the valley, *Convallaria majalis*, is amongst one of the more popular motifs. A series of the photographic plates records various aspects of the development of designs using the lily of the valley motif. A simple and elegant line drawing of the motif resonates throughout the collection of lily of the valley designs ([1-09-011]). There are several plates that show the development of the motif from this initial line sketch to design sketches experimenting with placement and repeat ([5-06-003]). Two designs use the combination of the lily of the valley and fleur-de-lis motifs, one incorporated into the logo for a hotel ([5-09-003]) and the other a detailed technical point paper drawing for production ([5-09-008]).

Lily of the Valley
Convallaria majalis

Initial design sketch. Line sketch of a bunch of lilies and leaves bound by a ribbon. “Repeating piece for pattern” written on top right corner of plate.

Lily of the Valley – branches & flowers with circular garland border
Point paper design.

Lily of the Valley – two versions containing fleur-de-lis
Point paper design.

Lily of the Valley – corner design
Point paper design.

Lily of the Valley

Point paper design.

Lily of the Valley & fleur-de-lis

Design used on hotel linen ware. W. Hinder Hotels, Du Parc, Cape Town.

Lily of the Valley & fleur-de-lis
Design and on hotel linen ware. W. Hinder Hotels, Du Parc, Cape Town.

Lily of the Valley

Drawings detailing scale, repeat and alignment.

Initial line sketches of designs some of which have tonal qualities.

Lily of the Valley & fleur-de-lis
Design used on hotel linen ware. W. Hinder Hotels, Du Parc, Cape Town.
Chrysanthemum

Designs using various forms of the chrysanthemum motif are by far the most plentiful. The chrysanthemum reveture also known as ‘flora’s daisy’ or ‘hardy garden mum’ with its deeply lobed upright leaves and large compact clump-forming flower heads is one of the more popular designs [3-01-006]. Another motif based on the more tightly packed chrysanthemum pom-pom [4-09-003] makes several appearances in napkin and tablecloth designs. The more open headed variety of the chrysanthemum species reminiscent of dendranthema lavandulifolium makes a few appearances [1-01-026]. The daisy-like chrysanthemum variety, such as japonense chrysanthemum, also features in several designs [3-04-011] accompanied by the distinctive chrysanthemum leaf.
DAMASK DIGNITIES

Landscapes

Amongst designs for domestic tableware are those with various landscape or waterscape themes. The realistic depiction of fields, ponds, hedgerows, agriculture and wildlife are recurrent subjects for design development.

Agriculture

Sheaths of wheat or wheat combined with poppies appear in two designs. A square napkins design shows a corner, border and centrepiece arrangement of sheaths of wheat (1-11-006). A beautifully painted circular napkin design is adorned with wheat and poppies with a wreath-like centrepiece and a garland border of alternating posies of wheat and poppies (4-02-004).

Waterscapes

Several designs have motifs of windmills and sailing boats on seascapes (4-04-002 & 3-04-004). Other water scenes include pond life with dragonflies and kingfishers (2-11-006), lily pads and bulrushes (2-11-010) and hovering water birds (2-11-002).

Rural

There are several designs of rural landscapes that capture; poppy fields (5-09-001), hunting scenes (6-08-010), stags amidst brambles and landscapes reminiscent of the Scottish highlands (2-04-014) and pheasants rising from heathland (5-09-009).
DOMESTIC GALLERY

Celtic

Rock of Cashel
Point paper design. Corner and centrepiece design for napkins. Border with Irish wolf hounds, round towers and harps.

Rock of Cashel
Corner design. Line drawing. Segment of corner design with intricate Celtic knotwork and shamrocks.

Rock of Cashel
Point paper design. Corner and centrepiece design for napkins. Border with ruins of abbeys and Celtic crosses.

Muckross Abbey
Point paper design. Corner and centrepiece design with Ulster, Munster, Connaught and Leinster shields.

Muckross Abbey
Point paper design. Corner and centrepiece design. Border with Ulster, Munster, Connaught and Leinster shields.

Muckross Abbey
Point paper design. Partial corner and centrepiece design.

Muckross Abbey
Point paper design. Partial design for corner and centrepiece.

Muckross Abbey
Line drawing. Partial corner and centrepiece design.

Rock of Cashel
Point paper design. Corner and centrepiece design for napkins. Border with ruins of abbeys and Celtic crosses.

Rock of Cashel
Corner and centrepiece design for napkin. Border with Irish wolf hounds, round towers and harps.

Rock of Cashel
Corner design. Line drawing. Segment of corner design with intricate Celtic knotwork and shamrocks.

Cill Áirne
Painted, circular centrepiece design for 7-05-002.

Cill Áirne
Celtic knotwork in shamrock border. Square napkin design.

Cill Áirne
Point paper design. Corner and centrepiece design for napkins. Border with ruins of abbeys and Celtic crosses.
Flowers & Leaves

Anemone
Painted point paper design. Napkin design showing corner, border and centrepiece.

Grapevine
Painted point paper design.

Fern, ivy & field iris
Painted point paper design.

Corner design
Painted sketch.

Thistles, shamrocks & rose
Painted sketch.

Lilac
SYRINGA
Border design showing translation, repeat and linear bands.

Buddleia
BUDDLEJA
Line sketch.

Fern & violet
Napkin and tablecloth designs.

Oak leaf & acorns
QUERCUS ROBUR
Painted sketch of corner design. Geometric borders enclose oak leaf garland design.

Fern & forget-me-nots
Painted sketch for Napkin. Guiding marks and lines present outlining the centrepiece.

Oak leaf & acorns
Line drawing with technical details.

Roses & Shamrocks
ROSA & TRIFOLIUM
Line sketch of border design.

Fern & violet
Line sketch of border design.
DOMESTIC GALLERY

Neoclassical

Poppies and wheat
Hand-painted floral arrangement.

Climbing floral
Point paper design of border section.

Shamrock
TRIFOLIUM Border and separate corner design.

Roses & forget-me-nots
ROSA & MYOSOTIS Painted sketch of corner design.

Poppies, roses & daisies
Painted sketch.

DOMESTIC GALLERY

Neoclassical

Garlands and rosettes
Point paper. Corner and border design.

Garlands and medallion
Point paper. Corner and border design. Seems to have been a popular design for hotels. Handwritten instructions for the placement of different hotel logos. For example: Fairmount, San Francisco; the Montreal Club; The Mayflower, Plymouth, Cotton Mama; Ambassador Hotel, The Warwick.

Urns, medallions and garlands
Point paper. Corner and border design.

Urns, medallions and rosettes
Point paper. Corner and border design.
Domestic Gallery

Constructivist

Floral garlands, ribbons and rosettes
Proof cloth. Corner and border design.

Highly stylized floral with strong directional lines
Point paper design.

Geometric zigzag border with chrysanthemum
Reversal repeat.

Stylized poppy head with geometric pattern
Painted sketch. Half-drop repeat all-over pattern.

Floral garlands and urns
Point paper. Corner and border design.

Abstract ‘tulip’ with strong geometric pattern
Reversal repeat. Block repeat all-over pattern.

Garlands, ribbons and rosettes with thistles
Proof cloth. Corner, centre and border design.

Geometric zigzag border with chrysanthemum
Reversal repeat.

Stylized poppy head with geometric pattern
Reversal repeat. Half-reversal all-over repeat pattern.
DOMESTIC GALLERY

Patterns

- **Selected Fabric**
  - Painted sketch. Block repeat all-over pattern.

- **Savannah**
  - Painted sketch. Reflected brick repeat all-over pattern with guiding lines.

- **Textured Floral**
  - Painted sketch. Block repeat all-over pattern.

- **Floral**
  - Line sketch. Reflected brick repeat all-over pattern with guiding lines.

- **Interlocking Circles**
  - Point paper. Brick repeat all-over pattern.

- **Yachts**
  - Reflective sketch. Block repeat all-over pattern with guiding lines.