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Kantha: The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal from the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection and the Stella Kramrisch Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

Darielle Mason
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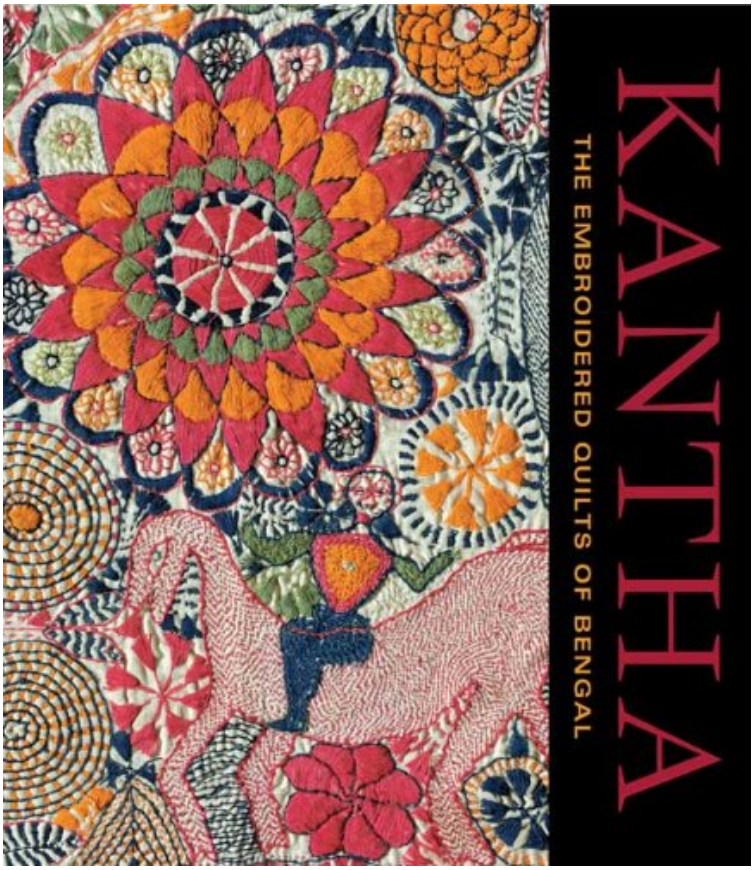

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Darielle Mason : Kantha: The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal from the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection and the Stella Kramrisch Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Kantha: The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal from the Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz Collection and the Stella Kramrisch Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art:

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Stunning and Scholarly Book about Kantha EmbroideryBy LuvKimonoThis is a very beautiful and interesting book about kantha, embroidered quilts from Bengal, that were collected by Stella Kramrisch and Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz and then donated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The large format book was published in conjunction with an exhibit of the quilts at the museum from December 2009-July 2010. One can only hope that the exhibit will travel, for these embroidered quilts that originated in the recycling of used family garments display great originality and remarkable technical skill. The items collected by Kramrisch and

the Bonovitzes were mostly done on white cotton using colored cotton thread that was pulled from other garments. The simple running stitch was used to create background texture and was combined with other stitches that were used for patterning. The motifs used were derived from ritual art practiced by the populations of the area, and were often interpreted with original and whimsical styling. Indeed, one of the most striking characteristics of the kantha presented in this book is the artistic ingenuity of their makers in the idiosyncratic presentation of design motifs.There are seven scholarly essays to accompany the presentation of the collection, but the book's greatest draw is the photographs of each of the quilts from the two collections. Though most of these objects share the same layout of a central motif and surrounding panels, every single one of the quilts is original in the makers' interpretations of what should be done with the space. These photographs are exquisite and are large enough and detailed enough to do justice to these original works of art. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in embroidery and textile art.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent research in this book about the history and meaning ...By PennyExcellent research in this book about the history and meaning of Kantha images. Photos are good quality, but disappointly few closeups of stitching. Photos of the quilts in the two collections that are included in this book can be viewed on the internet.9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Creative KanthaBy J. R. LovederA brilliant, decisive compilation of all that is Kantha. It is historical, descriptive, thorough - and a delight with many, many pictures, photographs and close-ups of Kantha work throughout the centuries. One of the best books I have bought for many years.

This first book-length study on kanthas published outside of South Asia focuses on two premier collections, one assembled by the legendary historian of Indian art, Dr. Stella Kramrisch, the other by Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz, leading proponents of self-taught art. Created from worn-out garments imaginatively embroidered by women with motifs and tales drawn from a rich regional repertoire, kanthas traditionally were stitched as gifts for births, weddings, and other family occasions. Innovative essays by leading scholars explore the domestic, ritual, and historical contexts of the fascinating quilts in these collections—made between the mid-19th and mid-20th century in what is today Bangladesh and West Bengal, India—and trace their reinterpretation as emblems of national identity and works of art.

About the AuthorDarielle Mason is the Stella Kramrisch Curator of Indian and Himalayan Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.