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War and Peace. Lace designs by the Belgian sculptor Isidore de Rudder (1855–1943)

In the autumn of 1918 the Committee of Belgian Refugees presented a scarf of needle lace to Queen Wilhelmina as an expression of their gratitude for the shelter given to them in the Netherlands during the First World War (Fig. 1, a + b). The scarf now forms part of the collection of H.R.H. Princess Juliana, which has been on loan to the Rijksmuseum since 1966. It bears the dates 1914 and 1915 at one end, 1916 and 1917 at the other and is signed I. DE RUDDER.¹

Isidore Liévin de Rudder (1855–1943) came of an artistic family (Fig. 2). His father, Isidore Jean, a painter of genre scenes and a decorative sculptor, ran a well-organized decorative workshop in Brussels, where the young Isidore played and 'helped'.² After leaving the Brussels Athenaeum at the age of seventeen, 'to the delight of his teachers',³ he eventually entered the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles. There he studied drawing under Josef Stallaert, painting under Jean Portaels and, most importantly, sculpture under the great Belgian Romantic sculptor Eugène Simonis, whose last pupil he was.⁴ In 1852 he won the Second Prix de Rome and this enabled him to make visits to Germany, England and France. He made his name with a sculpture called *The Nest* (Fig. 3), a typical High Victorian image of happy motherhood with a young mother laughing as she feeds her three small children. A plaster version of this was exhibited in Paris in 1883 and again in Antwerp in 1885, after

which the museum in Antwerp commissioned a rendering in marble, which was exhibited in 1886. Meanwhile De Rudder had also begun producing allegorical female figures of a type that were to figure prominently in his œuvre throughout his career, pieces like *Primavera* (1882) and *Truth* (1884). The Antwerp commission was followed in 1887 by that for the mausoleum of the Royal family in the cemetery at Laeken, for which he produced a group of an old woman, a girl and a child entitled *The Three Ages*. With this the pattern of his career as a sculptor was set and he went on to produce a whole series of monuments, allegorical figures, a fountain, a garden vase and numerous busts and medallions. A most successful and prolific sculptor, he received ample official recognition by being made professor at the Brussels Academy, where he trained numerous pupils,⁵ and Chevalier of the Order of Leopold and the Order of the Crown of the Congo.⁶ He has been characterized as an 'individualist',⁷ but in fact he scarcely developed a style of his own in sculpture. Instead he for the most part continued the eclectic tradition of the 19th century, working in whatever style seemed appropriate for a given piece or commission. 'He possessed to a supreme degree the talent of assimilation'.⁸ Even Pol de Mont, one of his most fervent admirers, had to allow that he 'never sought for complete originality'.⁹ The clearest influence on his work was that of the Italian Renaissance,



Afb. 1. Scarf, needle lace, 245 × 45 cm, signed by Isidore de Rudder, Belgium (Opbrakel), presented to H.M. Queen Wilhelmina in 1918. Collection of H.R.H. Princess Juliana, on loan to the Rijksmuseum

while he is said to have had a passion for Dürer that practically amounted to a cult.¹⁰ Because he so obviously stood outside the modern movement, De Rudder was a neglected figure until fairly recently, when other aspects of his work began to attract attention in the light of the renewal of interest in Art Nouveau. De Rudder's 'talent for assimilation' not only made him an eclectic sculptor, but also led him to practise many other genres. In addition to making prints and paintings, he turned his attention to many branches of the applied arts from 1892 onwards. It was here perhaps that his specific talents were able to develop most fully, for in his sculptures too it is often a purely decorative detail – the delicate flowing lines of the drapery of his *Belgica*¹¹ or the laurel wreath with fluttering ribbons below a portrait bust – that is the liveliest and most appealing part of the work.

In the realm of the applied arts De Rudder made designs for Louis Wolfers' silversmithing firm in Brussels,¹² while his ceramic work was particularly noteworthy. Not only did he make designs for the firm of Vermeren-Coché for such notable pieces as a head of Daphne,¹³ four panels representing *Colour, Form, Harmony and Proportion*¹⁴ and a whole series of masks of widely varying types,¹⁵ but he also made vases and other pieces himself.¹⁶ In this he was impelled by an artistic ideal which he shared with many of his contemporaries: 'Why should not art come to the public, or, better, why should it not once more be applied to ordinary utensils, thus making them more beautiful?'¹⁷

De Rudder's work in the ceramics field appears to have ended in 1906¹⁸ and it was on a relatively minor scale compared with that for which he became internationally famous and which is also more germane to our present context, namely the long and impressive series of embroideries produced in collaboration with his wife. De Rudder married Hélène du Ménil in 1890. Born in Ypres in 1870, she had been trained in embroidery at L'École Funck on the Rue de Poinçon in Brussels and had taken lessons in drawing and painting from De Rudder's sister Maria.¹⁹ It has been suggested that her

Afb. 1a. Detail of centre of scarf in Fig. 1.



collaboration with her husband was inspired by that between Walter Cane and his wife in England²⁰ and it is almost certain that much of their figurative work was influenced by English models, but the first pieces produced by Hélène de Rudder in the workshop she started were simple chair covers with floral designs. The next stage was a successful design of a head and then, as a present for

their friend the painter Courtens, a panel based on a painting by him, which was designed by De Rudder. Courtens was delighted with this and urged the couple to continue their efforts in the same direction.

The first embroidery they exhibited was *Eagle and Swan*, shown at *Pour l'Art* in Brussels in 1894 and at the Vienna Secession,

Afb. 1b. Detail of end of scarf in Fig. 1.



where it was bought by a connoisseur.²¹ After that the De Rudders embarked on the series of figure panels which is such a characteristic aspect of their work. These included a screen featuring *The Three Fates*, which scored a great success in Munich in 1897,²² six large panels with female figures representing *Wisdom, Justice, Eloquence, Fortitude, Truth* and *Prudence*, commissioned for the

Hôtel Provincial at Ghent in 1896,²³ and numerous individual panels with classical figures such as the Muses.²⁴ In 1896, when De Rudder was commissioned to redecorate the *Salle des Mariages* in the Hôtel de Ville in Brussels, he designed embroidered hangings for a dais. These again featured female figures representing *Law, Love* and *Hope* (Fig. 4), as well as two putti with banderoles,

Afb. 2 (below left). Isidore de Rudder (1855–1943), self-portrait drawing. Reproduced from M. Rooses, *Het Schildersboek*, Vol. 5, Amsterdam 1901, p. 53.



a favourite motif of De Rudder's, which he also used in the decoration of the room itself.²⁵ The designs of all these panels have a static character with a strong Renaissance flavour in both the figures, which often hark back to Botticelli, and the plant motifs that may accompany them. They are also strongly reminiscent in both style and subject-matter of work produced in England.²⁶ The applied

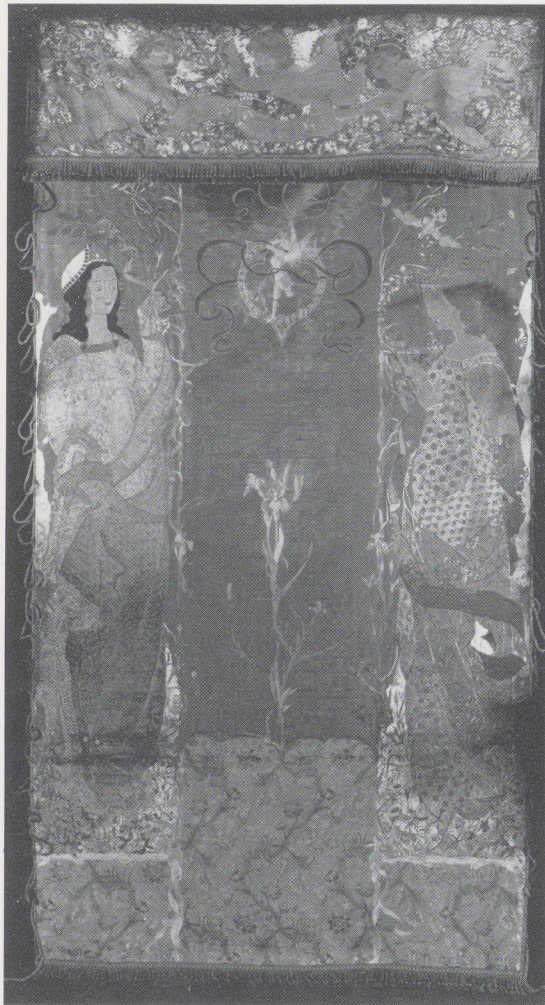
Afb. 3. *The Nest*, white marble, by Isidore de Rudder, 1886. Antwerp, Museum voor Schone Kunsten. Photo A.C.L. Brussels

work technique in which they were executed was also used in England, but Héléne de Rudder showed great originality in her use of patterned woven silks (often old ones) for this. These are often enriched still further by additional embroidery worked on top of them. A remarkable set of eight panels in a monumental, but quite different style, generally featuring a group of figures, is that commissioned for the Salon d'Honneur of the Congo Pavilion at the International Exhibition in Brussels in 1897. With the as yet unshaken self-assurance of that age, they feature the past and future of the Congo in terms of *Barbarism* and *Civilization*, *Polygamy* and the *Family*, *Fetishism* and *Religion*, *Slavery* and *Liberty* (Fig. 5).²⁷

Towards the close of the century Héléne de Rudder embarked upon the large panels of *The Four Seasons* (Fig. 6 and 6a).²⁸ which were to bring her and her husband international renown. For these she abandoned the applied work technique in favour of all-over stitchery in a technique derived from Japanese embroidery. The panel illustrated here shows not only her astonishing skill, but also the great gifts of Isidore Rudder as a pattern-designer in particular, notably in the use made of plants and animals in the borders. Two of the panels, *Spring* and *Summer*, were shown at the Turin Exhibition of 1902, where they won much approval. They were described in *The Studio* as 'in a style suggestive of Botticelli' and 'in exquisite taste as to colour, and the needlewoman's skill was simply astonishing; she had achieved what had always been thought possible only to the Japanese. M. and Mme. de Rudder have not wasted the ten years devoted to this wonderful work', while a further admiring notice appeared in connection with a joint exhibition by the De Rudders and Philippe Wolfers in Antwerp in 1903.²⁹

The De Rudders' last big embroidery commission, executed between 1904 and 1909, was for a set of eight enormous figure panels for the Salle des Mariages in the Hôtel de Ville at Saint-Gilles.³⁰ Here the subjects are again allegorical, but the style is more realistic, although use is again made of patterns created by leaves and flowers. The technique

Afb. 4. Embroidered canopy and hangings, signed by H el ene de Rudder, designed by Isidore de Rudder, 1896, for the Salle des Mariages, H otel de Ville, Brussels. Photo A.C.L. Brussels.



Afb. 5. Fetishism, one of a set of panels designed by Isidore de Rudder and embroidered by H el ene de Rudder for the Congo Pavilion at the Brussels Exhibition of 1897. Mus ees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels. Photo A.C.L. Brussels.



is different too: applied work is again used, but the application is embroidered all over to create a unified effect. The vogue for decorative embroidery of this type was coming to an end, however, H el ene de Rudder's example found no following and her workshop was closed in 1914.³¹

The First World War was, however, to introduce Isidore de Rudder to a new branch of textile art, namely lace. Although this aspect of his activities bears a direct relation to the rest of his  uvre, it has only been touched on briefly up to now.³² Before we turn to De

Rudder's lace designs, however, an explanation must be given of how he became involved in this work.

The story, as told by Charlotte Kellogg of the Committee for Relief in Belgium, begins around 1910 with the foundation by a group of mostly aristocratic ladies of *Les Amies de la Dentelle*, a society which aimed to preserve lacemaking, seriously threatened as it was by the inroads of machine lace, as a domestic industry. One of the most important ways of doing this was felt to be the improvement of the quality of design by the establishment of

specialist schools.³³ In 1911 the society came under the patronage of Queen Elisabeth. With the outbreak of war the situation of the lacemakers worsened dramatically, but by November 1914 an emergency organization, the Brussels Lace Committee, had been set up by a few of the society's members, with Mrs. Brand Whitlock, the wife of the American Ambassador, as the honorary president. It was eventually run, with the support of the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, by four ladies: the Comtesse Elisabeth d'Oultremont, the Vicomtesse de Beughem (an American), Mme. Josse Allard and Mme Kefer-Mali of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.³⁴ With the utmost difficulty the Brussels Lace Committee managed by an agreement signed early in 1915 to obtain supplies of thread from England and distribute it to the workers, buying up the finished work and endeavouring to sell it in Allied countries, the United States in particular.

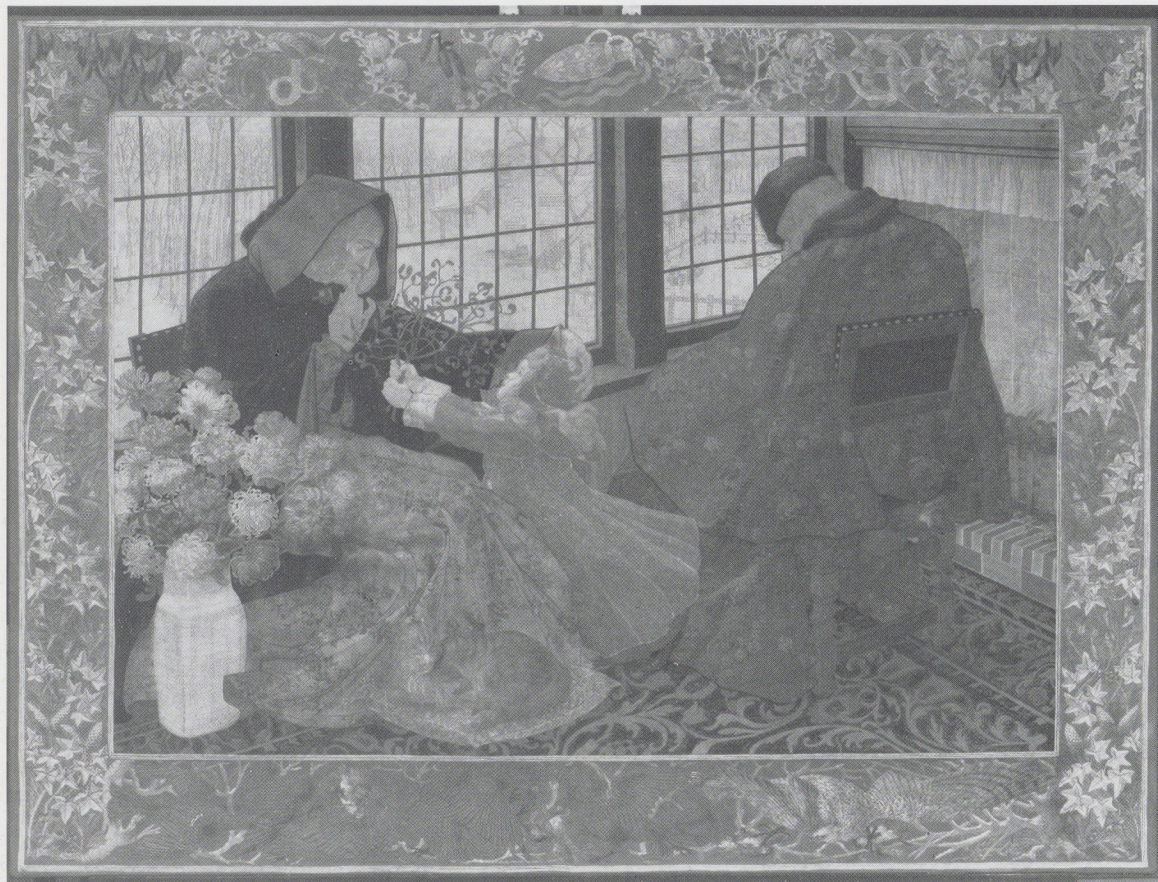
The Lace Committee was, of course, anxious to obtain designs of high quality and to this end it called upon the services of distinguished artists of the day. With this previous textile experience, Isidore de Rudder was an obvious choice.³⁵ It did not take him long to produce two outstandingly original designs. Both are connected with the Allied stand at the river Yser and the port of Nieuwpoort early in the war. A fan leaf in needle lace bears the name *Nieuport* and the date 1915 incorporated in an imaginative design of shells and seaweed (Fig. 7).³⁶ The organization of this design by means of curving festoon forms is characteristic of De Rudder.

The second design, a panel for a cushion or pillow cover, again features seaweed, this time in combination with a crab, starfish and eels, whose sinuous coilings retain strong Art Nouveau reminiscences (Fig. 8). The design bears the inscription *Yser* and the dates 1914 and 1915 in the centre.³⁷ Happily, the design for the second piece, in gouache on black card, is preserved in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire (Fig. 9). It bears the inscription '*Coussin. Aiguilles, Asteris, Crabe, Algues. D'après documents recueillis à Nieu-*

port'. These designs are not only highly decorative and original, but they are also, like so much of De Rudder's work, symbolic, expressing the breaching of the dykes to halt the enemy advance by means of the plants and animals that invaded the land with the waters. Like many of the designs made by artists for what was called War Lace, these pieces were meant more as works of art than for practical use. The first came to the museum from Queen Elisabeth; the second was part of a collection of War Lace presented to Mrs. Brand Whitlock in gratitude for her work by lacemakers in Belgium.³⁸ There is more than a hint in their style, which still has a distinctly Art Nouveau flavour, and in the needle lace technique chosen for them, of a desire to emulate the highly successful Art Nouveau designs, also executed mainly in needle lace, of the Central Spitzen Curs in Vienna, which had been one of the outstanding successes of the Turin Exhibition of 1902.³⁹ The decline of the Belgian lace industry towards the beginning of the second decade of the century and general indifference on the part of the manufacturers had inhibited any competition with Vienna in this respect until the revival set in train around 1911–12, but De Rudder's designs, among others,⁴⁰ were a definite step in that direction.

On the basis of the second of these designs it is possible to attribute a third piece to De Rudder, another panel, this time in the collection of the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (Fig. 10).⁴¹ This again features eels and seaweed and is extremely close in conception to the Yser panel. The actual design has not yet come to light,⁴² but the motifs are strongly related not only to the Yser design, but also to the way in which De Rudder used marine motifs in the border of the *Summer* embroidered panel, while the eels themselves are highly reminiscent of the fish in the *Pisces* motif of the *Winter* panel (Fig. 6a). The lace panel at Rotterdam is the same as one shown at an exhibition put on by the Lace Committee at the Rotterdam Kunstkring during the war in an effort to boost sales of War Lace.⁴³ To Isidore de Rudder fell the honour of

Afb. 6. Winter, panel from a set of Four Seasons, designed by Isidore de Rudder and made by H el ene de Rudder, 1897–1902. Mus ees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels. Photo A.C.L. Brussels.



Afb. 6a (below left). Pisces, detail of border of panel in Fig. 6. Photo A.C.L. Brussels.



designing the most prestigious pieces ever produced by the Lace Committee. The first of these is the scarf presented to Queen Wilhelmina. As so often, De Rudder seems to have felt somewhat constrained by such an 'official' commission and to have adopted a more orthodox style for it. Something of the playfulness of the marine designs is still to be found, however, in the pattern of stylized tulips, hyacinths and lilies-of-the-valley (Fig. 1a) which forms the main part of the scarf, with a border of a lily-of-the-valley design between lines of foliate scrolls. This part of the scarf again reveals De Rudder's special gifts in respect of the creation of flat patterns from naturalistic motifs.

The design of the ends of the scarf is centred on a sort of banner in the form

Afb. 7. Fan leaf, needle lace, h. 18 cm inscribed NIEU-PORT and dated 1915, designed by Isidore de Rudder. Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels. Photo A.C.L. Brussels.



of a cartouche with the Royal Arms of the Netherlands with the motto *JE MAINTIENDRAI* above (Fig. 1b) In a curving band below, which is outlined with chains, appear the arms of the nine provinces of Belgium (Brabant, Liège, Hainault, Antwerp, West Flanders, East Flanders, Limburg, Namur and Luxembourg). These armorial elements are highly appropriate on such a gift, but they also illustrate the practical way in which the Lace Committee went to work. The coats of arms of the Belgian provinces, of Belgium itself and of the Allies were a standard part of their repertoire. They had the advantage that it was possible to make them separately and then incorporate them in any given design. They were made right from the start of the War Lace project⁴⁴

and figure in the majority of the pieces that now survive from it.⁴⁵ Clearly they made an irresistible appeal to the patriotism and war fever with which people were imbued at that time. The arms of the Belgian provinces, this time in bobbin lace in the Mechlin technique, form the centrepiece of a lace cloth with a Valenciennes border, which was presented to Charlotte Kellogg after the war,⁴⁶ while those of the Allies figure on a tablecloth which bears an embroidered inscription to the effect that it is a grateful mark of homage to Mrs. Brand Whitlock from the lacemakers of Belgium (Fig. 11).⁴⁷ This second cloth also has insertions and a border of oak leaves and acorns. These again could be made separately and incorporated in any desired arrangement.⁴⁸ Branches with oak

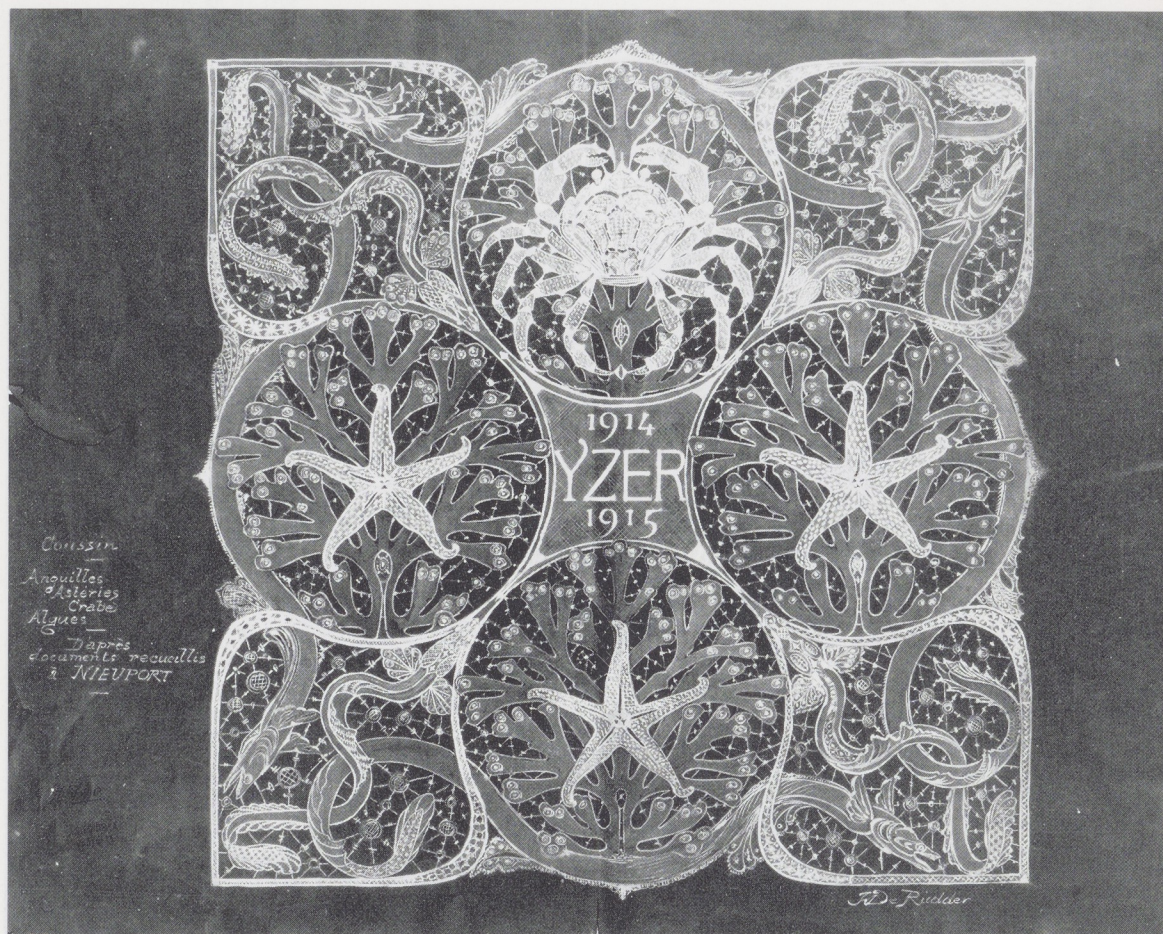
Afb. 8. Panel for pillow or cushion, needle lace, 41 × 41 cm, inscribed YZER and dated 1914/1915, designed by Isidore de Rudder. Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington D.C.
Photo no. 62019.



leaves and acorns surround the Royal Arms on Queen Wilhelmina's scarf and rectangles of laces or darned netting with an oak leaf pattern also form part of a cloth composed of lace in various techniques, which is said to be after a design by De Rudder. The arms of the Belgian provinces in needle lace also figure in this cloth, which is now known only from a photograph in an album compiled by Baronesse Allard, which was presented by her to the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire*.⁴⁹ It is not clear, however, whether the oak insertions and border are by De Rudder, although they certainly resemble his style.⁵⁰ The Royal Arms on Queen Wilhelmina's scarf are gaily surrounded by gambolling

putti showering fruit out of cornucopiae and baskets amid the sweeping curves of the main part of the design, swags of fruit and fluttering ribbons. Putti like these were one of the clichés of more traditional Rococo-inspired design around the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. They made an early and undoubtedly distinguished appearance in lace in a needle lace fan leaf designed by Leon Sacré, which was awarded first prize at an exhibition in Brussels in 1883–4 (Fig. 12).⁵¹ Putti with flowers figure in many of De Rudder's designs in other media and he made other lace designs with them too. Winged Cupids with flowers and sometimes also with banderoles figure in

Afb. 9. Design for lace panel in Fig. 10, gouache on black card, 46 x 46 cm, signed by Isidore de Rudder, 1915. *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire Brussels*. Photo A.C.L. Brussels.

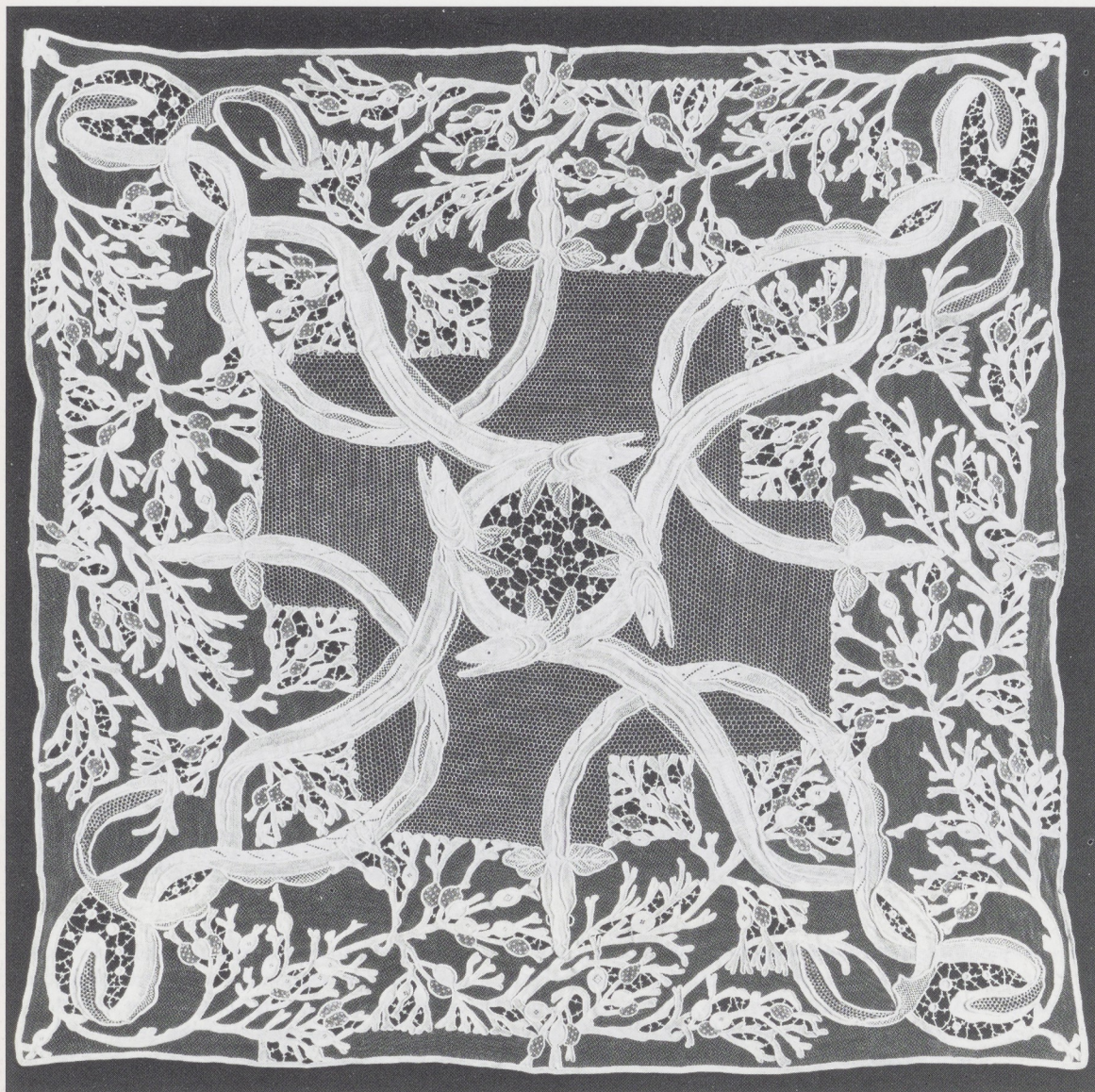


three designs for panels for bed covers, of which there are photographs in Baronesse Allard's album.⁵²

Finally, the scalloped ends of Queen Wilhelmina's scarf are formed by De Rudder's favourite curving swags with the crowned letter W and dates in wreaths of husks suspended from them by fluttering ribbons. The design is, of course, a highly symbolic one. Charlotte Kellogg can enlighten us on this point.⁵³ The tulips and hyacinths are 'Dutch national flowers', while the lilies of the valley symbolize 'the return of happiness'. The chains around the arms of the Belgian provinces are an obvious allusion to the wartime occupation, while the putti represent

'the children of Holland showering flowers of abundance upon the martyred children of their sister kingdom'. This sort of high-flown symbolism was typical of the period and, as we have seen, it informed the major part of De Rudder's work in all the media he used. Just as De Rudder depended for the success of his embroidery designs on the skilled technique of his wife and her workers, so too his lace designs demanded the highest standards of technique and interpretation from the workers who made them. These words certainly forthcoming. The scarf in particular is a real tour de force of the *point de gaze* needle lace technique, with the most subtle effects obtained by the variation of the den-

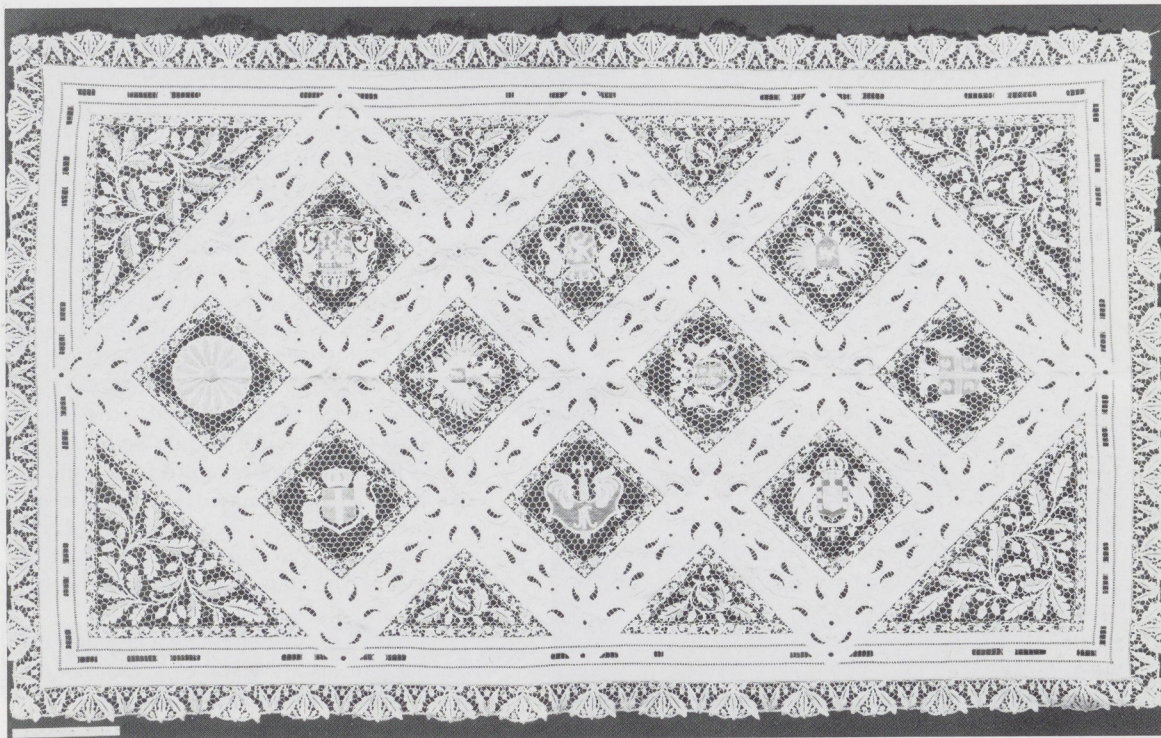
Afb. 10. Panel, needle lace, 43 × 43 cm, attributed to Isidore de Rudder, c. 1915. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam



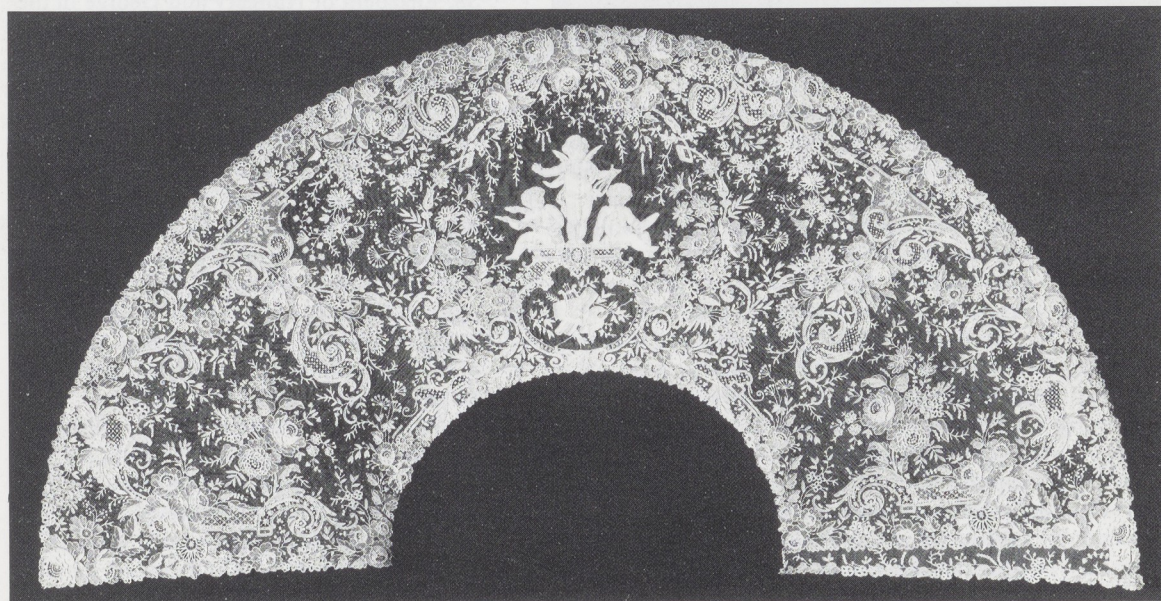
sity of the stitches to produce shading and a most judicious application of filling patterns to enliven the design. It was made at the convent of the Sœurs Franciscaines at Oprakel, which Charlotte Kellogg describes as 'unquestionably the first in Belgium' in respect of figurative work in needle lace.⁵⁴ The convent was founded in 1819 at the request of the parish priest with the aim of

relieving the dire poverty at Oprakel by teaching the girls and women lacemaking.⁵⁵ At first black silk lace of Chantilly type was made there, since Oprakel is not far from Gerardsbergen (Grammont), which became the leading centre in Belgium for the production of this type of lace in the first half of the 19th century.⁵⁶ Some time in the 1870s, however, the convent went over to making

Afb. 11. Table cloth, needle lace and embroidered linen, c. 1917. Inscribed: 1914 - A Mrs. Brand Whitlock 1915-1916 - Hommage - Reconnaisant - des - Dentellières - Belges - 1917. Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington D.C. Photo no. 81.3768



Afb. 12 (below). Fan leaf, needle lace, h. 21 cm, designed and made by Leon Sacré, 1883-4. The design represents Les amours artistes, inspired by Boucher. Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels. Photo A.C.L. Brussels.



Afb. 13. Banquet cloth presented to H.M. Queen Elisabeth, needle lace, signed by Isidore de Rudder and dated 1918–19. Reproduced from A. Carlier de Lantsheere, *Les Dentelles Belges, Brussels* (c. 1926), p. 15.



the needle lace for which it was to become famous,⁵⁷ showing that the nuns had a keen business sense, since needle lace of various kinds, 'Venetian' and *point de gaze* among them, was now rapidly replacing Chantilly as the leading fashion lace. In 1902 the convent still had sixty workers and forty pupils and it was reported that the nuns themselves played an important part in the production of the lace, correcting bad pieces, working the filling patterns and carrying out the final operation of assembling or mounting the motifs.⁵⁸ While cotton had already largely supplanted linen as the principal thread used for lacemaking by the middle of the 19th century, the nuns at Opbrakel and at the daughter-house of this convent used linen exclusively and this gave an added cachet to

their work. During the war they produced numbers of panels and medallions with subjects from La Fontaine's *Fables* or fairy tales, which were either sold separately or incorporated into the large cloths which were so popular at that time.⁵⁹

De Rudder's second highly prestigious commission, a banquet cloth for presentation to Queen Elisabeth (Fig. 13), was made at the Opbrakel convent's daughter house at Erembodeghem, where the standard of work was equally high. When Charlotte Kellogg made a visit there in 1919, she was shown the pieces, which by then were ready for assembling: 'I had never imagined anything so lovely as the exhibit the sisters had been arranging on the long, low table... the separate parts of a banquet cloth to be offered to Queen Elisabeth on her return from exile. Two hundred and twenty details there were, on which during the darkest days of the war women had worked with unflinching faith and love'.⁶⁰ The cloth is again signed by De Rudder and dated 1918–19.

De Rudder's design again mirrors a number of aspects of his art. It has even more of the formality that characterized his approach to 'official' commissions. This comes out exceptionally clearly in the four figures of saints – SS. Elizabeth and George in the round medallions, SS. Gudula and Michael in the oval ones – which form the main feature of the centre of the cloth. The figure of St. Elizabeth in particular is reminiscent of De Rudder's sculptures (Fig. 14). The saint does have a certain monumentality and the roses and lines of the mantle an undeniable decorative quality, but there is also an awkward stiffness, which the skill of the lace-makers in effects of shading and the deployment of filling patterns cannot disguise. Only St. Gudula retains the Renaissance elegance of the figures in De Rudder's ceramic and embroidered panels.

The symbolism of the cloth too is centred on the saints.⁶¹ SS. Michael and Gudula are, of course, the patron saints of Brussels. St. Elizabeth, with the Red Cross below her, 'represents the Queen and her devoted work as a nurse during the war'. The crowned initial E appears below and this and the medallion

Afb. 14. Panel with St. Elizabeth of Hungary, needle lace, duplicate of the panel with the saint in the cloth in Fig. 13. *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels* (Inv.no. 1357).



with the saint are wreathed with olive branches and fluttering ribbons with eight lozenge motifs with inscriptions relating to an extended version of the Seven Works of Mercy: *Encourager les désespérés, Loger les réfugiés, Nourir les affamés. Vêtir les pauvres, Guérir les blessés, Délivrer les captifs, Consoler les affligés, Honorer les morts.* Below St. George, who stands for King Albert, is the Belgian decoration for bravery and the crowned initial A, all wreathed with oak and ribbons and with eight lozenges bearing the names of battles in which he participated: Haelen, Houthem-Saint-Marie, Hofstade, Sempst, Pervyse, Steenstraete, Houthulst and Passchendaele. In a rectangle in the centre of the cloth appear 'the immortal words spoken by His Majesty as he went from the Chamber, sword in hand, on the 4th of August, 1914: *J'a foi dans nos destinées. Un pays qui se défend s'impose au respect de tous: ce pays ne périt pas.*'

Around this central design is a border of a formal lily-of-the-valley pattern, which like that on Queen Wilhelmina's scarf symbolizes the return of happiness. Then comes a wider border with the coats-of-arms of the principal towns of Belgium amid what we can easily recognize from the designs discussed above as the seaweed of the Yser. Finally, there is a striking wide scalloped border incorporating oval medallions, each of which is surmounted by a wriggling eel of the Yser, a remarkably playful touch. The medallions contain beautifully drawn sprigs of 'les plantes de nos forêts et celles de nos jardins, si chère, on le sait, à notre reine bien-aimée.'⁶² The plants include toadstools, ivy, grasses, mistletoe, sloe, wood anemone, celandine, marguerite, violet, campion, snow-drop, wood sorrel, anemone, honeysuckle and Solomon's seal. They have a most delicate realism and the curving forms with which they are fitted into the medallions again retain an Art Nouveau flavour.

The cloth was exhibited by the *Chambre Syndicale des Dentelles, Tullés et Broderies* in the Belgian Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition of 1925. Although justly described in an official publication as 'a marvel of its kind',⁶³ thus bringing De Rudder's name briefly to the forefront again, the cloth failed to attract the same kind of international attention that his embroidery designs had won at Turin in 1902. Once again it was the innovative heirs of the Viennese tradition who stole the show, much publicity being given to the lace designed by E. Mildeová-Paličková in the Czechoslovakian section and to *Wiener Werkstätte* lace designed by Dagobert Peche and others.⁶⁴ Their light-hearted figurative designs, entirely in the spirit of Art Déco, were far removed from the solemn, static character of De Rudder's cloth.

The Belgians had nothing to show that could match them. Once again the Belgian lace industry had been overtaken by bolder, more forward-looking designers elsewhere. The fact is that the War Lace project, worthy and well-intentioned though it was, had not been a commercial success. As so often happened in ventures of this kind, philanthropic energy failed to be combined with business acumen.

In a report on the state of the Belgian lace industry in the *New York Times* of 3 March 1918 Milton M. Brown wrote, 'And so today in the wholesale lace department of the Commission for Relief in Belgium's London office there are over 4,000,000 francs' worth of some of the finest laces in the world'.⁶⁵ While the Lace Committee had succeeded in aiding the lacemakers, it had largely failed to sell their lace. The book written by Charlotte Kellogg was meant in part to publicize the state of the Belgian industry and endeavour to boost sales, but this and all the other promotional efforts were in vain. Expensive hand-made lace, so long under threat from cheaper machine products, finally succumbed to this intense competition after the war, bringing to an end the large-scale production of high quality pieces by the Belgian lace industry. However, although the War Lace venture failed to be followed up, it had certainly brought about a considerable, albeit temporary revival, the last in the commercial sense, in Belgian lacemaking and in that revival Isidore de Rudder can undoubtedly be said to have played an important part.⁶⁶

Notes

¹ A. M. L. E. Erkelens en C. A. Burgers, *Kant uit Koninklijk Bezit*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1966, cat.no. 123. It is extremely rare for lace to be signed in this way, although a number of other examples of signed pieces of War Lace are known. An earlier signed piece made for royalty is the wedding veil of Princess Stéphanie of Belgium, which is signed by Leon Sacré and dated 1880 (Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington D.C., inv.no. T. 13491).

² Max Rooses (ed.), *Het Schildersboek*, Amsterdam 1901, Vol.5, p. 56. The article on De Rudder is by Pol de Mont. See also E. Hesseling and F. Symons, *La Sculpture Belge Contemporaine*, Berlin/New York 1903, p. 19 and, among other reference books, W. G. Flippo, *Lexicon of the Belgian Romantic Painters*, Antwerp 1981.

³ Hesseling and Symons, *op.cit.* (Note 2), p. 20.

⁴ See Note 3.

⁵ Charles Conrardy, *La sculpture belge au XIXe siècle*, Brussels 1947, p. 56.

⁶ See Note 3.

⁷ Conrardy, *op.cit.* (Note 5), p. 56.

⁸ E. de Seyn, *Dictionnaire biographique des Sciences, des Lettres et des Arts au Belgique*, I, Brussels 1935, p. 371. I am indebted to Paul Chantaine of the Institut Royal du Patrimoine artistique, Brussels, for this reference.

⁹ Rooses, *op.cit.* (Note 2), p. 58.

¹⁰ See Note 8.

¹¹ Rooses, *op.cit.* (Note 2), p. 61.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 67. See also exhib.cat. *Art Nouveau België*, Europalia 80, België 150, Brussels (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten), 1980, cat.no. 533.

¹³ Rooses, *op.cit.* (Note 2), p. 67; *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), cat.no. 532.

¹⁴ Rooses, *op.cit.* (Note 2), pp. 62 and 67; see also *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), cat.no. 610 for a tondo with the head of *Colour*.

¹⁵ See *Art et décoration*, XIV (1903), pp. 350-352 and *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), cat.no. 608.

¹⁶ *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), cat.nos. 609, 611.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

¹⁸ *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain*, I (1968), p. 49, summary of dissertation: Yuan Jai, *Isidore de Rudder (1855-1943), artiste décorateur et sculpteur*, 1967, p. 50.

- ¹⁹ Exhib.cat. *Tervuren 1897*, Tervuren (Koninklijk Museum voor Midden Afrika) 1967, p. 102; M. P. Verneuil, 'Madame de Rudder Brodeuse', *Art et décoration*, xiv (1903), pp. 189–96. For the name of the school and the first of these references I am indebted to Paul Chantraine (see Note 8), who is preparing a study of the embroideries produced by the De Rudders and who very kindly shared his findings with me.
- ²⁰ By Y. Jai, see Note 18.
- ²¹ Verneuil, *op.cit.* (Note 19), p. 290.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 291. See also *Art et décoration*, I (1897), pp. 20–22 and *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), p. 143.
- ²³ Verneuil, *op.cit.* (Note 19), p. 292. These were lost in the Second World War.
- ²⁴ *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), cat.nos. 290, 292–4.
- ²⁵ *Art et décoration*, I (1897), pp. 20–22, III (1898), pp. 15–16; Verneuil, *op.cit.* (Note 19), p. 291. See also Rooses, *op.cit.* (Note 2), p. 63 for *Law*.
- ²⁶ Hangings designed by Walter Crane and embroidered at the Royal School of Art Needlework for its highly successful display at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876 featured allegorical figures representing *Music*, *Painting*, *Architecture* and *Poetry*, *Salve* and *Vale* and *The Three Fates*; see Barbara Morris, *Victorian Embroidery*. London 1962, p. 115. Panels designed for the School by Selwyn Image included a set of the *Four Seasons*, published in *The Art Designer* in 1887–8, and another of *Juno*, *Venus*, *Minerva* and *Proserpine*; see Morris, pp. 136–7 and Figs. 55 and 56. Embroideries designed by both artists were shown at the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions from 1888 onwards; see Linda Parry, *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, London 1988, pp. 121 and 129–30.
- ²⁷ Verneuil, *op.cit.* (Note 19), p. 292, exhib.cat. *Tervuren 1897* (Note 19), p. 102, exhib.cat. *L'Orientalisme et l'Africanisme dans l'art Belge 19e et 20e siècles*, Galerie CGER, 1984, p. 130, *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), cat.nos. 290, 291. Previously in the museum at Tervuren, now in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels.
- ²⁸ Verneuil, *op.cit.* (Note 19), pp. 294–6 with additional illustrations on pp. 291–3. *Summer* is now at the Musée Communal at Laeken, the remaining panels in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire. They have recently been restored at the Institut Royal du Patrimoine artistique.
- ²⁹ *The Studio*, 27 (1903), p. 282, 29 (1903), p. 231.
- ³⁰ These were kindly brought to my attention by Paul Chantraine. They are discussed by Y. Jai (Note 18).
- ³¹ *Art Nouveau België* (Note 12), p. 245, Note 36.
- ³² See M. Coppens, 'La stylistique dentellière à l'époque Art Nouveau. Son évolution jusqu'à la première guerre mondiale', *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain*, xv (1982), pp. 244, 246.
- ³³ M. Coppens, 'Les Amies de la dentelle. Un mécénat de type pédagogique', in: *Liber Memorialis 1835–1985*. Brussels (Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire) 1985, pp. 271–81.
- ³⁴ See the introduction (pp. 15–21) to her book *Bobbins of Belgium*, New York/London 1920.
- ³⁵ Other leading artists who made lace designs for the Committee were Fernand Khnopff and Adolphe Crespin. Coppens, *op.cit.* (Note 32), pp. 244, 245, 247.
- ³⁶ Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels, inv.no. D.1354.
- ³⁷ Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington D.C., accessions no. 172208, cat.no. E 383 766.
- ³⁸ Ten pieces from this collection are now in the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington D.C. They were presented to the museum by the Vicomtesse de Beughem in 1946. They have been carefully listed and described by Doris Bowman, to whom I owe grateful thanks for her kind and generous help on my visit there.
- ³⁹ See Coppens, *op.cit.* (Note 32), pp. 224–5, with extensive bibliography.
- ⁴⁰ For another Belgian initiative, by the society *Les Arts de la Femme*, see *The Studio*, lvi (1912), pp. 324–6 and Coppens, *op.cit.* (Note 32), p. 241.
- ⁴¹ Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, inv.no. MB 79. The piece was acquired in 1959 as a gift from the estate of Mevr. Stahl-van Hoboken.
- ⁴² All the designs of *Les Amies de la Dentelle* and the Brussels Lace Committee are now in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels, but the mammoth task of sorting and cataloguing them has not yet been embarked upon.
- ⁴³ An illustration of this is to be found in a cutting from an unknown source in the collection of Mevr. L. W. van der Meulen-Nullé, now also in the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen. I am indebted to Toos de Klerk, president of *Het Kantsalet*, for this reference.

⁴⁴ Examples of 1915 are to be found among the lace formerly in the collection of Mrs. Brand Whitlock (Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Acc.no. T. 172208, cat.nos. E 383 967 and E. 383 961).

⁴⁵ The Rijksmuseum possesses a pillow cover with the arms of Belgium (R.B.K. 1970-42) and small roundels with those of the United States (R.B.K. 1971-95a, b and 1973-104).

⁴⁶ Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv.no. 25-147. See *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, XX (1925), pp. 259, 261.

⁴⁷ Smithsonian Institution, The National Museum of American History, Acc.no. T. 172208, cat.no. E. 383 960.

⁴⁸ The Rijksmuseum possesses a bed cover with the arms and motto of Belgium and these oak pattern insertions and border combined with bobbin lace of the type known as *point de Flandre* (inv.no. R.B.K. 1979-307).

⁴⁹ I am very grateful to Marguërite Coppens for showing me this book and for the other generous help she has given me. Unfortunately the photographs in the book are now very faded, so that it is not possible to reproduce them.

⁵⁰ Charlotte Kellogg illustrates these elements (*op.cit.*, Note 34, p. 181), but says nothing about who designed them.

⁵¹ Musées Royaux d'Art en d'Histoire, Brussels, inv.no. D. 1601. This well-known piece is illustrated in many of the museum's publications on lace, e.g. M. Coppens, *Kant uit België van de zestiende eeuw tot heden*, 1981, cat.no. 50, illus. on p. 79.

⁵² The popularity of this type of motif is further illustrated by a 'Pompeian bed cover' featured in the same album, which incorporates an oval frieze and small oval panels with winged putti playing all sorts of games. The design, attributed to Mlle Brouhon, is said to be after the frescoes of the Villa Ditti at Pompeii, The panels were also used separately for cushions, lampshades, etc.

⁵³ Kellogg, *op.cit.* (Note 34), p. 207.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁵⁶ See M. Coppens, *Gerardsbergen Chantilly-kant*, Gerardsbergen 1984. The area bounded by Gerardsbergen, Ghent, Alost and Zele was the principal one for the production of War Lace, see Coppens, *op.cit.* (Note 32), p. 244.

⁵⁷ Kellogg, *op.cit.* (Note 34), p. 206.

⁵⁸ P. Verhaegen, *La dentelle et la broderie sur tulle*, Brussels 1902, pp. 210-11.

⁵⁹ Kellogg, *op.cit.* (Note 34), pp. 210-11. For an illustration of a panel with Little Red Riding Hood see A. Carlier de Lantsheere, *Les Dentelles Belges*, Brussels, n.d. (c.1926), p. 29. This is a promotional publication put out by the Ministère de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale. Marguërite Coppens kindly drew it to my attention.

⁶⁰ Kellogg, *op.cit.* (Note 34), p. 193.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-5 (the English quotations given below are from this source), Carlier de Lantsheere, *op.cit.* (Note 59), p. 14.

⁶² Carlier de Lantsheere, see Note 61.

⁶³ *Paris, Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Moderne 1925. Encyclopédie des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes au XXIème siècle, VI. Tissu et papier*, Paris 1925, p. 50 and Pl. LVI.

⁶⁴ *Art et décoration* XLVIII (1925), pp. 105, 107, 109, 125 and 132; *The Studio*, XC (1925), pp. 99, 102, 284-8.

⁶⁵ Reprinted in *Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club II* (1918), No.2, pp. 26-8, as one of a series of pieces in the first two numbers of the journal of this New York society expressing concern over the state of the lace industry in Europe.

⁶⁶ It is quite probable that more lace designs by him will eventually come to light. Two Valenciennes borders, one with an ivy pattern, the other with cornucopiae, of which photographs appear in Baroness Allard's album, are attributed to him in a pencil note there.