

Arrow belt

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Multicolored cotton carnival belt. Made on the loom.

Accession Number 2021.07.48

Date 2020 an

Materials fiber, cotton

Technique woven, machine-made

Measurements 12 x 160 cm

Historical context

This cotton belt was designed for the Carnaval de Québec. Since the 1950s, this event has used arrow belts as symbols of the festivities. This historically rich object, created by French Canadians in the 2nd half of the 18th century, is worn by the Bonhomme Carnaval for two weeks. While the belt worn by this official carnival emblem is a traditional, handmade piece, those worn by carnival-goers are often mechanically manufactured in Asia, not contributing to the visibility of unique know-how.

Fléché is a hand-braiding technique requiring several hundred hours of work, using wool as the raw material. Similar to the universal herringbone technique, fléché is more sophisticated. The patterns formed can be highly complex, giving arrowed belts great aesthetic and technical qualities.

Visually, the belt shown here has no arrowhead, lightning or flame motif. As it is mechanically woven, the patterns are less complex. Conversely, hand-weaving gives a more irregular appearance and a unique texture to each piece.

In 2016, the technical, historical and cultural particularities of fléché led to its designation as an element of Quebec's intangible heritage. Today, a number of specialists and associations are continuing the tradition of dart-making, with a view to passing on historical and traditional knowledge.

Photo by Louis-Etienne Dore