

Ethnohistorical collection

Arrow belt

<https://collections.pacmusee.qc.ca/en/objects/arrow-belt-2021-015-012/>

Collections / arrow belt



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Carnival belt in red, white, blue, yellow and green wool. It appears to have been plaited “au carton”.

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Period 1st half of the 20th century

Materials fiber, wool

Technique woven, machine-made

Historical context

This wool belt was probably designed for the Quebec Winter Carnival. Since the 1950s, this event has used arrow sashes 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 made of cotton, and mechanically manufactured in Asia.

This belt, however, is made of wool, and appears to have been plaited “au carton”, an artisanal plaiting technique using strips of cardboard to create patterns. Indeed, the patterns here are identical on both sides, a characteristic not found on mechanically produced carnival belts, but achievable with cardboard braiding. However, although handmade, this belt cannot be described as arrowed.

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

Today, a number of specialists and associations are keeping the know-how of fléché alive, with a view to passing on historical and traditional knowledge.

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