Banyan

Place of origin: Great Britain (made)
Date: 1740-1750 (woven)
1750-1760 (made)
Artist/Maker: Garthwaite, Anna Maria, born 1690 - died 1763 (designer)
Materials and Techniques: Silk damask, lined with silk taffeta and linen,
hand-sewn with silk and linen thread
Credit Line: Purchased with Art Fund support and assistance from the Friends
of the V&A, and a number of private donors
Museum number: T.92-2003
Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description
This is an unusual example of a banyan or nightgown for a woman. In the 1650s, the introduction of the Japanese kimono to Western society by the Dutch East India Company started a fashion for these simple loose garments. While it was difficult to import traditional kimonos from Japan, English tailors were soon making them up in the most fashionable silks. The woman’s banyan remained an informal garment throughout the 18th century. It would have been worn over stays and petticoats in the privacy of home, either in the morning before dressing formally for the day or in the evening before changing for bed.

This particular example from the period 1750 to 1770 combines the traditional T-shape of a kimono with the conventional European shaping for a woman’s gown at the back and sides.

Physical description
A T-shaped garment, open at front, with sleeves reaching to the forearm with a turn-back cuff, made of green silk damask and lined with green silk taffeta and beige linen. There is one pleat on either side of the front and one tapered box pleat at the centre back. There are gores inserted and pleated into the side seams. Although the banyan is extensively pieced with no complete repeat of the damask pattern, there is no sign of previous folds or stitching.

Dimensions
Length: 145.0 cm overall at back, Circumference: 97.5 cm at chest

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Object history note
Formerly part of the Castle Howard Costume collection, the private collection of George Howard. Purchased on 7 October 2003 from the Sotheby’s.

Historical significance: An unusual example of a banyan or nightgown for a woman. It combines the T-shape of a man’s nightgown inspired by the Japanese kimono with the traditional shaping at the back and sides for a woman’s gown. This would have been worn informally in the privacy of home.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O85965/banyan-garthwaite-anna-maria/