The Norwich shawl
by Zita Thornton

Price guide

It can be difficult to positively attribute a shawl to the city of Norwich. Many textile specialists list them as European or possibly Norwich.

However, the price of shawls at London auction houses, identified as Norwich, has fallen over the last five years. Over this period, Phillips has offered a good selection of Norwich shawls.

In 1996 they sold a number of Norwich shawls for between £320 and £460. In May 1999 two Norwich shawls were sold by them for £280 and £300 but two with an estimate of £250-£300 failed to sell. Later the same year they offered almost a dozen Norwich shawls and although two were sold for around £400, nearly half with an estimate of £200-220 remained unsold. Others went for £130, £270 and £300. Also in 1999, Sotheby’s sold one lot containing two printed Norwich shawls for £207. In October 2000, Christies sold a shawl possibly Norwich for £235. A month earlier, Phillips had sold one for £138.
European shawl woven with a Jacquard loom which allowed intricate patterns to be used. Photo courtesy of Vintage Textiles.

This one shows a copy of a reversible Kashmir shawl from the 1830s. Photo courtesy of Vintage Textiles.

European shawl, possibly Norwich, from 1840s. Photo courtesy of Vintage Textiles.

This is the reverse side of the Kashmir copy showing how weavers perfected the reversible weave to compete with the double sided shawls which were coming from Kashmir. Photo courtesy of Vintage Textiles.

Detail of ‘paisley’ border of the shawl above. Photo courtesy of Vintage Textiles.

French shawl c1839 designed by Couder for 1839 Paris Exhibition, using over 101,000 Jacquard pattern cards. Sold for £690 at Christie’s June 1999.

French shawl woven c1867 showing the difficulties of distinguishing between the different types of European shawl. Sold at Christie’s June 1999, £4,600.

European shawl woven with a Jacquard loom which allowed intricate patterns to be used. Photo courtesy of Vintage Textiles.

Selection of shawls on sale at Christie’s March 1999.