Silk weavers since the eighteenth century, the Garín family opened their factory in the early nineteenth century. Since then, successive owners kept records of their production, conserving both fabric samples and written documentation, and the resulting collection of some seven thousand items is now administered by the Moncada Silk Museum. The collection is an almost entirely untapped resource, having been unavailable to experts until only recently, but new research will shed light on textile design and changing tastes from the eighteenth century onwards, revitalising heritage that is central to the study and public knowledge of silk production in our culture.

From factory to museum

In 2013 the Garín factory underwent a profound transformation. After 200 years of industrial activity it was converted into a museum, creating a living installation that continues to produce hand-crafted fabrics alongside a collection of exhibits that include systematically compiled production records. The museum marks a departure from the traditional static exhibit model, fusing past and present in a more active approach to heritage conservation. It provides a multidisciplinary cultural space for research, education and interpretation, as well as for a variety of creative pursuits.

In the textile sector, the most immediate threat in times of crisis is the loss of historical fabrics, which many companies are forced to sell off to balance their accounts. Garín, however, understood the wider value of its fabrics and put in place specific measures to conserve them, going to considerable lengths to preserve its textile collection alongside the original documentation that accompanied each piece. Since its unveiling, the Moncada Silk Museum has kept the Garín collection together, preventing a gradual dispersal of the heritage generated by this emblematic Valencian silk manufacturer and creating the best possible conditions for its ongoing
The fabrics and drawings have suffered the characteristic deterioration caused by regular handling, changes of location, building work at the company, and a series of disastrous events such as the 1948 flood or the 1986 fire, which damaged or destroyed much of the documentation.

In 1997, the collection of drawings and fabrics was ordered and classified by Mª Victoria Vicente Conesa at the request of Garín. The digital inventories covering the final two decades of the twentieth century are obsolete and only those compiled from 2000 onwards can now be accessed.

Priority in the initial stages has been given to cataloguing the collection. Arrangements for public exhibition will be made at a later stage, once the museum has received the official designation of ‘museographic collection’, as governed by Article 69 of Law 5/2007, which regulates the recognition of cultural heritage states in Valencia.

The original materials conserved from the Garín factory make up a rich and varied collection of exhibits dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including 805 original designs, 1056 cutting plans, 200 punch cards, more than 4000 historical fabric samples, twenty items of ecclesiastical attire, a historical archive with a range of visual materials, a library collection (publications from the nineteenth century, historical reviews, technical manuals and exhibition or sample catalogues), specific documentation (production records, copies of notarial records, invoices, ledgers, salary sheets, cost projections, supplier orders, colour charts) and industrial equipment. The museum still houses eleven original looms, warpers and card punchers that not only shape the discourse of the historical exhibition but also anchor the unique relationship between museum and working factory.

The singularity of this new heritage installation has enabled its curators to pursue projects on a scale that would be unfeasible for a conventional textile museum. Since the underlying concept is that of a “living museum”, where visitors will be able to see fabrics being weaved using traditional methods, the guiding philosophy will be public participation in the organisation of cultural activities and knowledge dissemination, for experts and the general public.

A comprehensive inventory has been produced and digitised to create a database combining detailed images and textual descriptions. Each individual
file describes the features of the exhibit and its links to other pieces in the collection, enabling researchers to browse through relevant selections quickly and accurately. Current projects at the Moncada Silk Museum include the creation of a searchable online archive of the same material. By creating a collection that can be consulted digitally, the team has minimised the need to handle fragile textile and paper items, greatly reducing the risk of deterioration and damage.

The collection as it stands today was not intended as a museum piece; rather, it grew naturally from the creation of new products, with a strictly commercial aim. It is only with the passing of time that the documents and fabric samples have acquired historical value. Scientific study is in itself a means of safeguarding the future of this unique industrial heritage; private collections are notoriously restricted, to prevent designs being copied, but the transformation of the Garín factory into the Moncada Silk Museum has created an accessible set of archives, providing detailed information that assists researchers in their task and bolsters the collection’s historical and market value.
Creative process

The collection contains a rich variety of items from each stage in the design and manufacturing of a traditional fabric, from the original sketch through to the final finishing techniques. The designs themselves are dominated by plant and mythological motifs, which illustrate the evolution of tastes and market trends over the years. The popularisation of history over the course of the nineteenth century was reflected in the extensive use of revival motifs in the applied arts. Fabrics from this era, which were used mainly to make ecclesiastical garments, bear religious iconography, plant themes related to the Eucharist — such as wheat, grapes and roses — and floral motifs in the French style. The twentieth century brought the stylised forms of Art Nouveau and avant-garde abstraction to textile design, and the number of orders from the Church fell as demand from the conventional clothing and upholstery markets grew.  

The original paper designs represent the first step in the creative process, as seen in the sketches conserved at the museum, which date from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. Once a design had been selected, the sketch had to be made suitable for weaving, which was done by translating it into a cutting plan, or raqueta. The cutting plan was set out on squared paper in such a way that it could be correctly interpreted by the loom, although every effort was made to respect the skill and the lines of the designer. Each
column of squares corresponded to a warp thread, and each row represented a passage of the weft. The colours of the cutting plan indicated different stitch patterns, and the back of the paper often contained notes about the fabric type or equivalences to be consulted by the weaver. Both the original sketches and cutting plans often bore the date and the name and properties of the fabric, making them valuable resources for establishing the approximate dates of older designs. Additionally, the reverse of the cutting plan generally bore the name of the printing firm.

The next step was to create the punch cards. To produce the desired pattern or design, a Jacquard loom follows instructions provided in the form of cards punched with a series of precisely positioned holes, which are interpreted by the skilled hand of the master weaver to create richly patterned fabrics such as silk brocades and damask.

**Garín designs**

Work to catalogue the collection, together with painstaking study of the documentation in the Garín archive, has helped to establish the origins of famous Garín designs like Carpio, Francia, Nuncio and Rica. Researchers first examined the sketches and cutting plans. This information was then cross-referenced against written sources in the document archive, which also served to identify the type of clients, the trends at the time — colourful fabrics and extensive use of decorative motifs — and changes in price.

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6 Some, such as Rica or Nuncio, display the date of the original design, which may be the date on which the drawing was commissioned or a later addition. We have followed the evidence of ink or pencil notes, and in the case of the squared paper used for the cutting plans, the name of the engraver or printer.

7 Production records, order books and manuals from the Moncada Silk Museum archives.
Sketch for Jacquard fabric with zoomorphic motifs. AMS.

Sketch of the design San Lucas, second half of the nineteenth century. AMS.
Carpio and Francia are two of the oldest Garín designs. Although the cutting plans, printed by "Monneret et Dusserre a Lyon" in 1839, are undated, we can trace the designs to the mid-nineteenth century. The documentation contains written notes about the designs: in 1850, the "Espolín Leon de Francia" is referred to in the "Report on what I present at the exhibition of the year" and from 1852 we find "Carpio design cost 20 reales". As we can see from the cutting plans, the Carpio and Francia designs were also called Carpiet and Francieta. Although the base drawing is the same, two versions were weaved, varying in the number of colours used for the flowers; the former were richer in colour and retailed at a higher price, and the latter denominations Carpiet and Francieta eventually disappeared from use.

The Rica design can also be traced to around the mid-nineteenth century, perhaps even earlier. There are three surviving cutting plans, only one of which is dated, showing the year 1910, but the appearance suggests that it is the most recent of the three. Additionally, of the other two designs, the Rica Seber, is drawn on squared paper printed by José Coromina, Plazuela dels Peixos casa nº 10, who taught the engraving course at the Escola de la Llotja in Barcelona (1814-1820) and died in 1834, while still the school’s assistant director. Documentation produced prior to 1850 contains notes referring to "Espolín la Rica".

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8 Charles Monneret and Jules Dusserre are described as "marchands de gravures" in: MOUGIN-RUSAND, P., Annuaire administratif et commercial du département du Rhône, Lyon, 1839.
10 Oral testimony: information provided by Rafael Martínez Soucase, a second-generation manager and weaver at Garín, since 1944.
11 In some cases new cutting plans were ordered to introduce changes to previous designs.
12 VERNEDA RIBERA, Meritxell, L’Art gràfic a Barcelona. El llibre il·lustrat 1800-1843, Doctoral thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, 2012, p. 71. In this thesis the workshop of José Coromina is described as being located in Call del Governador in 1800. An earlier study indicated that the two addresses are in fact the same: COMAS I GUELL,Montserrat, La impremta catalana i els seus protagonistes a l’inici de la societat liberal (1800-1833), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, 2009, pp. 377.
Two cutting plans are conserved of the Nuncio design, and although only one is dated (bearing the year 1904) the other is known to be earlier. The design was commissioned by the Papal nuncio to Madrid, Monseñor Antonio Rinaldi, Archbishop of Heraclea, for the Te Deum at the swearing of the constitution of King Alfonso XIII in May 1902. The design is assumed to have been created specifically for this occasion, as it is not recorded in either technical documentation or order lists from the nineteenth century.
Conclusions

The transformation of the Garín silk factory into the Moncada Silk Museum has converted its archives into an invaluable source of reference material for researchers. The collection, which comprises documents, an image archive and a textile library, is a fundamental resource for studying the earliest Garín fabrics, many of which are conserved at different institutions. The new museum will harness the value of the company’s artistic and cultural heritage, prioritising its long-term conservation to aid ongoing research into textile production and support efforts to prevent the fragmentation of collections like it.

As well as a cultural heritage site, the museum is also a working industrial facility, creating a dual function that gives back to society. Through a collaboration with the companies Garín and Gironés-Vila, the museum has reproduced and reissued the design San Ildefonso using the original nineteenth-century machinery and techniques. The process was guided by the documentation held in the museum’s historical archive, which provided the information needed to create the cutting plan and punch cards and to weave the final design according to the traditional method, taking inspiration from fragments of historical woven fabrics.

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