



**Lace flounce**  
**Linen, needle lace**  
**17<sup>th</sup> century, Venice (Italy)**

# Lacework

The French word for lace «dentelle» (meaning small teeth) appeared for the first time in 1545. It was defined as an openwork fabric made of interlaced yarns.

It was either made with a needle, which was a technical evolution of embroidery, traditionally attributed to Italian female workers of the Venice region, or it was made with a bobbin, a technique from the trimming industry, which was attributed to Flanders.

The production increased in Italy, Flanders and France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in private or even family workshops, in convents or orphanages, then from 1665 onward in state workshops.

Being a luxury good, lace was an ornament for the clergy garments and liturgical linen, the nobility clothing and linen.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the expansion of flax cultivation and the intensification of trade between European countries allowed the art of lace-making to develop and diversify. Many cities created their own style : needle lace in Alençon, Sedan, Argentan ; bobbin lace in Bruxelles, Malines, Binche, le Puy en Velay, Valenciennes, Lille, Bailleul.

The Revolution stopped the production.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lace-making partially came back, being used by the bourgeoisie and also in the fashioning of regional costumes.

During the Second Empire, Chantilly's black lace, which was imposed by Empress Eugenie, proved extremely successful throughout the trend of shawls, parasols and fans.

Mechanical lace-making, which appeared around 1830 in England, also spread in France (Calais, Lyon). At lower cost, it allowed the imitation of handmade lace-making, which practically disappeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cotton replaced flax yarn.

For several decades, handmade lace-making has been enjoying a revival in many regions as a leisure activity.



**Pillow for lacemaker**  
**Coat-of-arms**  
**Terrier (producer)**  
**1935, Bailleul**  
**Velvet, bobbin lace**