



Upphlutur; Woman's traditional ensemble

Date

20th century

Primary Maker

Artist not recorded

Medium

Fabric

Description

Ensemble from Reykjavik, Iceland (Bartlett #s1458-1466).

The upphlutur is a traditional Icelandic women's bodice that became a distinctive element of national dress in the 18th and 19th centuries. Typically made of velvet or wool in dark tones, it features decorative front lacing—originally with a silver or brass chain—and is often richly embroidered with gold or silver thread. Worn over a white

blouse with full sleeves, the upphlutur was used both in everyday life and for festive occasions, with finer materials and embellishments denoting formality. Its name, meaning “upper piece,” refers to its role as the fitted upper garment of women's traditional attire. The design later inspired the upphlutsbúningur, one of Iceland's national costumes, and remains an enduring symbol of Icelandic cultural identity, often worn for national celebrations and special events today. The upphlutsbúningur, or upphlutur ensemble, consists of several distinct garments and accessories that together form Iceland's traditional women's dress. The fitted, sleeveless bodice (upphlutur) is worn over a white blouse with full sleeves (skyrti), and paired with a dark wool skirt (pils), a fine apron (svunta), and a white petticoat (hvítt pils). The costume is completed with silver ornaments (upphlutssilfur), including buttons, brooches, and a lacing chain (snæri or keðja). A woman's cap (hyrna) with long ribbons is typically worn with the ensemble, along with stockings fastened by ribbons (sokkabönd) and black leather shoes (skór).