

FESTIVE SUZANI

'HANGING GARDENS OF CENTRAL ASIA'

The Burrell Collection,
2060 Pollokshaws Road,
Glasgow, Scotland.
28 April – 28 September 1988

It is particularly appropriate that the Burrell Collection's contribution to the Glasgow Garden Festival should be 'The Hanging Gardens of Central Asia', an exhibition showing its recently restored and little-known collection of suzani, five of which were displayed until 26 July and the remainder from then until 28 September.

The Burrell Collection freely admits that it was not until after the 1983 opening of its purpose-built galleries in Pollok Park that it fully appreciated the importance of suzani. Once it realised that there are only two other such collections in Britain, at the Victoria & Albert Museum and at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, no effort was spared in restoring the pieces.

The suzani were displayed on slightly sloping screens which spread their weight and made the detail of the embroidery easier to see. Conservation was the reason both for the dim light in the gallery and the relatively short time the suzani remained on display, as vegetable dyes, especially when used on silk, are particularly fugitive.

The first phase of the exhibition contained two suzani from Shakhriyabz, one from Nurata, one from the district of Bukhara and a nim-suzani from Bukhara. These last two pieces and the suzani from Shakhriyabz are outstanding examples of Central Asian needlework, probably dating from the early 19th century, and showed a range of colour, a subtlety of design and a mastery of technique which disappeared later in the century.

Three other embroidered textiles were also included in the exhibition: a 16th or 17th century velvet cushion cover and a 17th or 18th century hanging both from Turkey, as



*Shakhriyabz suzani, South Uzbekistan, 19th century.
The Burrell Collection, Glasgow, Inv. no. 30/4.*

well as a remarkably fine Caucasian or Persian square.

Those who were unable to visit Glasgow should not

despair. The suzani will be shown again in 1990 during Glasgow's City of Culture year.
Aldyth M. Cadoux

*Ura-Tube suzani, North Samarkand, 19th century.
The Burrell Collection, Glasgow, Inv. no. 30/7.*

