

Press Release

Berlin, March 18, 2009

Museum of European Cultures Arnimallee 25, 14195 Berlin-Dahlem Germany

Tuchintarsien in Europa von 1500 bis heute.

Inlaid Patchwork in Europe from 1500 to the Present

Exhibiton from March 19 to July 5, 2009

As part of the activities on the occasion of its tenth anniversary, the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin-Dahlem shows a special exhibition of magnificent textile pictures which have been gathered specifically for this presentation from all over Europe and are of unsurpassable uniqueness. During the compilation of these exhibits unexpected connections of European history unfolded.

Provenance

Large and small decorative textile tapestries and covers display delicate motifs such as proud horsemen, tender blossoms, odd characters, wild animals and religious stories, all of which combine to form a baroque pictorial cosmos. The illustrations refer to historical events and personalities and depict insignia of royal and aristocratic houses or document historical military events. Some objects were used as early church textiles or can be interpreted as table cloths from middle-class circles or as textile expressions of professional pride, others even show the influence of Asian techniques. The common characteristic of all of the presented textiles is their sophisticated basic technique – intarsia work, which is also known as "inlaid patchwork" in the Anglo-Saxon countries.

In the exhibition, the visitor is presented with close to 40 original objects from countries such as Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Poland, Switzerland and Sweden as well as Ireland, the United States of America and Australia, where the pieces are made available to the public for the first time. ((Das ist die wörtliche Übersetzung. Ich vermute allerdings, es ist gemeint, dass die Stücke in der Berliner Ausstellung der Öffentlichkeit erstmals vorgestellt werden. In diesem Fall lautet die Übersetzung: ... as well as Ireland, the United States of America and Australia. This is the first time these pieces are made available to the public.)) In addition to the

Seite I von 3

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textile exhibits, there are objects explaining the cultural and historical connections, such as design sketches, pattern books and historical documents of the time.

Seite 2 von 3

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Production

The basic material of all the objects is milled, firm, non-fraying wool cloth. Wool cloth with these characteristics is ideal for cutting out individual pieces of images which can then be sewn together and inlaid into other pieces without needing to be seamed. The individual pieces of the textile picture are sewn together with small stitches at the back of the work. This results in textile surfaces respectively pictures with barely visible stitches. During the production of these objects, textile technique and composition of the pictures frequently go hand in hand. In order to use the material as economically as possible, motifs cut from cloths in contrasting colours were inserted into the panels of the opposite colour. In most cases, it is no longer possible to identify the makers of the objects. Some of these complex works were created in cloisters or by secular ((Nonnen sind auch Frauen)) women. Others were made by civilian or military tailors. The materials used were mostly fabric scraps or even used clothing, since milled wool cloths in particular were very precious until far into the 19th century. The results were colourful, richly ornamented and very lively pictorial stories.

Use

Inlaid patchwork items have been found in Europe even from the Early Modern Era. Most of the objects used to belong to the Church. In addition to picture bibles, lavishly decorated tapestries were used like picture books to tell stories from the Old or New Testament. Other pieces allow us to draw conclusions about private festive use. Some "fabric paintings" were even used as saddle blankets for the army. During the 19th century, the production of inlaid patchwork in Central Europe seems to have gone out of fashion. At least, there are just a few pieces dating from that time. The only exceptions are Great Britain and Ireland: most of the objects found in museums and collections in these countries can be dated to the 19th century. However, although they show parallels with pieces in Central Europe, they also present a specific imagery. Their iconographic programmes focus on events and trends that are political, cultural or critical of society, as well as on individual personalities. Among the most interesting pieces is a work that depicts the government under Queen Victoria. It is accompanied by a design sketch where every single person depicted can be identified.

Patchwork Berlin - Patchwork Europe

Many inlaid patchwork objects reveal themselves to the viewer as pictorial stories that are particularly fascinating due to their colourfulness, unaffected pleasure in telling stories and textile fragility. They are the

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results of knowledgeable, creative work of men and women – of artists who are known to have spent several years working on these pieces. Against this background, Ursel Arndt, one of the most well-known textile artists in Berlin, developed an art project in cooperation with the Museum of European Cultures which has involved the creation of an inlaid patchwork tapestry of the early 21st century. This tapestry entitled "Patchwork Berlin – Patchwork Europe", which deals with the current imagery of sprayed stencil images, will complete the exhibition.

Seite 3 von 3

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Contacts

"Inlaid Patchwork in Europe from 1500 to the Present"

Dahlem Museums: Museum of European Cultures – National Museums in Berlin

Arnimallee 25, 14195 Berlin, Germany Special exhibition room, entry Lansstraße 8

March 19 - July 5, 2009

Opening Hours: Tue - Fri 10.00 - 18.00, Sat + Sun 11.00 - 18.00

Admission Fees: 6 € / concession rate 3 € Secretary: +49 (0)30 - 266 42 6802

Further Information:

General Information Phone: +49 (0)30 - 8301-438

www.smb.museum/mek

www.verein-museum-europaeischer-kulturen.de

Catalogue

"Inlaid Patchwork in Europe from 1500 to the Present" German/English Ca. 370 pages with numerous coloured and b/w illustrations, 21 x 27 cm Verlag Schnell & Steiner, at the exhibition 39.90 €, in bookshops 49.90 €

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