

KUNSTHALLE MÜNCHEN

Press release

THE FABRIC OF MODERNITY MATISSE, PICASSO, MIRÓ ... AND FRENCH TAPESTRIES 6 December 2019 – 8 March 2020

For the first time in Germany, the Kunsthalle München is presenting tapestries that were produced in the Manufacture des Gobelins in Paris from designs created by the most prestigious artists of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Le Corbusier, Joan Miró and Louise Bourgeois. With innumerable large-scale wall hangings that span the period from the end of World War I to the present day, the exhibition reveals just how surprisingly modern the traditional craft of tapestry weaving truly is.

The exhibition showcases one virtually unknown aspect in the oeuvre of numerous modern artists of international renown: turning their attention to tapestry, they have extended the limits of the genre, constantly re-interpreting the age-old textile art form and giving it a new lease of life. Working to artists' designs, the Manufacture des Gobelins, which was founded during the reign of Louis XIV (1638–1715), and other French workshops produced not just tapestries, but also furniture and carpets of outstanding quality, examples of which are also on show in the exhibition. The textile masterpieces were created in the manufactories in close cooperation between the artists and the weavers; their combination of artistic finesse and superb craftsmanship remains unsurpassed to this day. The old techniques of producing and dyeing the yarn, weaving and knotting are virtually unchanged in the making of the tapestries. From preparing the model through to the finished wall hanging, creating a large-scale Gobelin still takes thousands of hours of work.

In nine sections, the exhibition traces the development of the modern tapestry and the history of the French manufactories in the 20th century. Not only do the pieces on display chronicle the historical upheavals, they also attest to the numerous developments in the visual arts that came to the fore during this century and were reflected in textile art.

The tour begins with tapestries from the period following World War I. Projects such as Georges Desvallières' (1861–1950) *France 1918* (1936) symbolise the fate of the nation during the war. Others, such as Edmond Yarz' (1846–1921) *The Pyrénées* (1924), celebrate the beauty of their French homeland. The fascination with other, 'exotic' cultures and the Grande Nation's claim

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to colonial power found expression during the inter-war years in decorative tapestries such as *Le Mékong* (1935–1937) by Pierre-Henri Ducos de la Haille (1889–1972), which represented the state manufactories at World Expositions like the 1931 *Exposition coloniale internationale*.

The next chapter is devoted to Jean Lurçat (1892–1966), who started making a name for himself as the re-inventor of tapestry in the 1930s. He propagated a return to the characteristic features of the textile medium, calling for a greatly reduced colour palette, simplified lines and distinctive, decorative imagery that was disengaged from painting.

The following exhibition room sheds light on a watershed in the history of modern Gobelins by exploring the role played by tapestries and the manufactories in occupied France during World War II. The monumental works commissioned by Joachim von Ribbentrop and Herman Göring bear silent testimony to the megalomania of the National Socialists: the unfinished tapestry *The Globe* (1941–44) was originally designed to be more than 72 m². By contrast, Jean Lurçat turned the tapestry into a form of socialist protest, carrying out projects in the unofficial ateliers of Aubusson as part of the resistance against the national socialist regime.

The end of World War II heralded the dawning of a new era for the manufactories, which subsequently placed greater emphasis on the collaboration with prominent artists. The great masters, among them Henri Matisse (1869–1954), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979) and Joan Miró (1893–1983), were to transport the medium into the present and help give tapestry a higher standing in the art system. Many of their designs were intended to be made exclusively as tapestries, thereby accentuating the characteristic features of the textile art form.

The increasing trends towards abstraction in painting and sculpture during the post-war era were also manifest in the projects of the French manufactories, for example in tapestries based on originals by Hans Hartung (1904–1989) or Zao Wou Ki (1920–2013). The unique allure of many of these gestural, abstract works lies in the awe-inspiring skill with which even the finest brushstrokes were replicated using a loom. Even top art exponents such as Victor Vasarely (1906–1997) and Yaacov Agam (*1928) designed carpets and tapestries that showcased their signature optical illusions, creating the impression of movement and the semblance of three-dimensionality. Moreover, collaborations with sculptors of the calibre of Alicia Penalba (1913–1982) and Edouardo Chillida (1924–2002) experimented with and transcended the boundaries of the medium. Penalba's *Triptych* (1982/83) depicts heavy, black shapes in relief, contrasted against a white background, thereby elevating tapestry into the realm of sculpture.

The exhibition concludes with a series of compositions that explore the potential of new media and digital imaging techniques, shaping the future of tapestry on a progressive scale. They include photo-realistic tapestries, such as *Friday* (2010) by Patrick Tosani (*1954), as well as works that show unusual perspectives or adapt digital images. When Raymond Hains (1926–2005) replaces the classic border of his tapestry diptych *From Eustache to Natacha*

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(2001 – 2005) with the frame of a computer screen, this is not merely a modern take on traditional visual elements. His approach also highlights the structural similarity between digital imaging techniques, which are based on pixels, and the corresponding, grid-like weave of the tapestry.

The exhibition is presented in cooperation with the Mobilier national and the Manufacture des Gobelins, de Beauvais and de la Savonnerie. It was inspired by the “Au fil du siècle” exhibition, which ran from 10 April 2018 to 4 November 2018 in the Galerie des Gobelins in Paris. Following its presentation in Munich, “The Fabric of Modernity” will be on show in Kunsthall Rotterdam.

The **Mobilier national** in Paris administers the Manufacture des Gobelins, the Manufacture de Beauvais and the Manufacture de la Savonnerie. In addition to awarding tapestry projects, the state institution is responsible for preserving, researching, extending and restoring its own collection, while ensuring that the special weaving expertise is passed on. To this day, the Mobilier national provides historical and contemporary tapestries, furnishings and carpets for France’s public ceremonial rooms and state buildings. Furthermore, it organises exhibitions in the Galerie des Gobelins and in cooperation with other institutions. With very few exceptions, all works on display belong to the collection of the Mobilier national.

With around 350,000 visitors every year, the **Kunsthalle München** is one of Germany’s most prestigious exhibition houses. Located at the heart of Munich, the Kunsthalle stages three large exhibitions a year on a variety of themes. Equipped with state-of-the-art museum technology, the approximately 1,200 m² exhibition space is a respected platform for artworks representing a variety of genres from painting, sculpture, graphic art, photography and crafts, through to design and fashion. The Kunsthalle München’s diverse programme alternates monographic exhibitions with thematic projects, yet also includes interdisciplinary concepts.

As of: 11.10.2019

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KUNSTHALLE MÜNCHEN

OPENING HOURS

daily 10am–8pm | **15.1. and 19.2.2020:** 10am–10pm

24.12.: closed | **31.12.:** 10am–5pm | **25.2.:** 10–18 Uhr

Special opening hours for school groups:

each wednesday 9am–10am, by appointment only: kontakt@kunsthalle-muc.de

DIRECTOR

Roger Diederer

EXHIBITION CURATOR

Roger Diederer, Carina Kaminski (Kunsthalle München)

Lucile Montagne, Gérald Remy (Mobilier national)

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Martin Kinzmaier (stage and exhibition designer)

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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PRESS IMAGES FOR DOWNLOAD

https://www.kunsthalle-muc.de/en/press_area/the-fabric-of-modernity/

ADMISSION FEE

Standard: € 12 | **Reduced fees:** Senior citizens (60+): € 11 | Students (< 30 years) and unemployed: € 6 | Young people (6–18 years): € 1 | Children under 6: free of charge | school classes: € 1 per pupil (pre-booked) | Family pass for 2 adults and their (grand-)children (< 18 years): € 22 | On Mondays 50% discount on all admission fees (except bank holidays: 6.1.2020)

GUIDED TOURS

Guided tours for groups: guided tours in languages other than German: Tue–Sat: 10am–8pm, by appointment only: kontakt@kunsthalle-muc.de

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME (SUMMARY)

»Re-Act!« Harry Klein goes Kunsthalle, Afterwork^{KH} evenings and lectures. Furthermore there will be **curator's tours** and **guided tours** for children.

CATALOGUE

Accompanying the exhibition Hirmer Verlag has published an extensive catalogue with over 150 colour illustrations. Edited by Roger Diederer. With essays by Marie-Hélène Massé-Bersani, Carina Kaminski, Lucile Montagne, Gérald Remy, Thierry Sarmant, K.H.L Wells.

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The Kunsthalle Munich is supported by

