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Our Cover Illustration



The Swiss National Exhibition 1964 in Lausanne is far from being forgotten. On several past occasions « Textiles Suisses » has devoted articles to it, and in particular a whole special issue published in May 1964. In addition, the cover illustration of our No. 1/1965 showed one of the eleven peasant tapestries or banners hung in the entrance to the « Soil and Forest » sector.

This great Swiss Exhibition, held only once every 25 years, was accompanied by a remarkable exhibition of paintings at the Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne, entitled « Masterpieces from Swiss Collections, from Manet to Picasso ».

« Textiles Suisses » would have liked to have been able to call attention earlier to the importance of this exceptional exhibition by reproducing one of the paintings on its cover. Unfortunately previous commitments and pressing administrative requirements prevented us from doing so at the time. But we had already selected the work now reproduced on the cover, « The Witches » by Paul Klee. Even though he was not legally a Swiss citizen, this painter of German origin, who was born in 1879 and died in 1940, is well known to have spent part of his life in Berne, where the « Klee Foundation » possesses a great many of his works. Referring to the catalogue of the exhibition held at the Palais de Beaulieu, we read: « In 1938, Paul Klee painted two or three pictures on the theme of witches, those primitive creatures cast out by society to become spirits of the earth and forest. In these works, the artist drew his inspiration from the witches of Macbeth and in particular from the line: « Fair is foul and foul is fair ». The painting exhibited at the Palais de Beaulieu is the most important in the series. There is another smaller version (50 x 31 cm),

very similar in composition, kept at the Klee Foundation in Berne. »

It is an oil painting on paper, on jute, 99 cm high by 74 cm wide, and signed in the top left hand corner « Klee », from a private collection in Berne.

For readers of « Textiles Suisses » the interest of this painting, which we did not want to disfigure by placing the title of our periodical across it (and in this way our cover gains in artistic honesty what it loses in graphic effectiveness), resides not only in its intrinsic artistic value, in the concentration of the subject, the economy of the means used and the expressive strength of its tones, in a restricted range of browns and reds, but also in its similarity of language to purely textile motifs. Colours, forms and surface treatment give this remarkable work of Klee, shown here in all its intensity, a similarity to primitive textile designs — those of Javanese batiks and the fabrics woven by the natives of Central and South America — in which the mystery of souls that are both simple and complex is expressed with genuine vigour.

Finally, let us take this opportunity of thanking the collector who was kind enough to allow « Textiles Suisses » to reproduce his painting on its cover.