

The swiss textile industry and the swiss industries fair

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Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss textiles [English edition]**

Band (Jahr): **- (1946)**

Heft 1

PDF erstellt am: **04.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798961>

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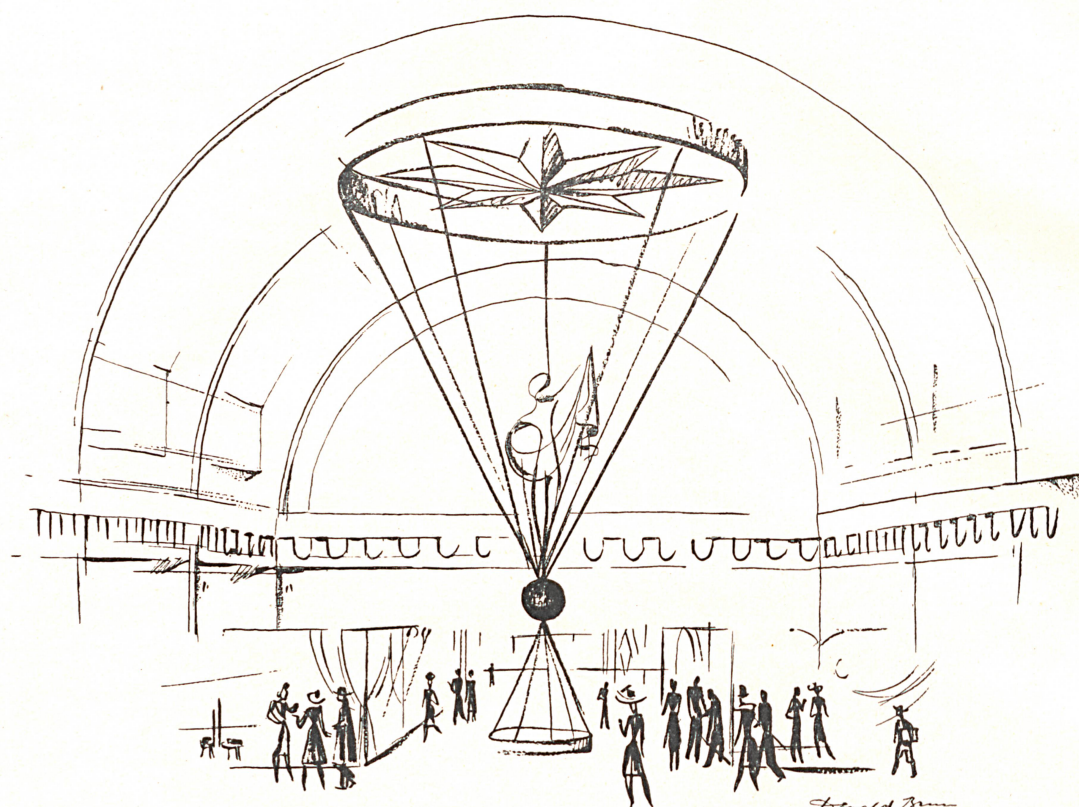
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The Swiss Textile Industry and the Swiss Industries Fair

Textiles are one of Switzerland's most ancient industries and, up to 1923, were a dominant factor in the country's export trade. Although Switzerland does not produce her own raw materials, and despite high manufacturing costs, the Swiss textile industries have succeeded in constantly expanding their trade. This very fine development is due to the quality of their products. Before the first World War, the embroidery industry figured as the foremost in Swiss export trade: in 1913, embroideries to the value of 215 million francs were exported. Persevering and untiring research to increase production, technical improvements, the very high artistic value of the goods produced allied to remarkable workmanship, were the factors which made it possible for this industry to place on world markets products which cheaper goods could not rival. The wonderful progress achieved in the finishing trade and the discovery of processes such as mercerization, the preparation of organdies, lace materials, and so on, have made it possible to produce more delicate and gossamer-like materials than ever before. Consequently, the Swiss textile industry has developed tremendously in recent years. Great attention has been paid of late to the training of skilled textile craftsmen because, in the production of quality fashion goods, much depends on the capabilities, artistic sense and power of adaptation of the workers in this trade. It is by securing the perfect training of skilled labour that the Swiss embroidery industry, whose centre is the city of St. Gall, has won world-wide recognition.

The Swiss silk industry holds a place almost equally important in the nation's economic structure and, here again, we find that a similar policy of production has been adopted, based on principles which, even today, remain the foundation of Swiss industry.

The collapse of world economy which followed the first Great War, the ever-growing customs barriers, the prohibitions and restrictions on import, applied more particularly to textiles, all were causes of a very marked retrogression in Swiss textile exports during the between-war period. Nevertheless, our manufacturers did not lose heart. They set about improving their technique, sought new products and raised the quality of their products to a still higher level.

The development of printing and finishing processes, the progress achieved in spinning, twisting and weaving resulted in the creation of a new export speciality — the fine St. Gall fabrics — and thus exercised a most favourable influence on the silk and embroidery industries. Haberdashery, knitwear manufacture and the outfitting trades have also developed considerably in the last decade or two and are today elements of growing importance in the Swiss textile industry.

Although this group has now been surpassed by the machinery industry as regards export figures, there is no doubt that the textile industry is the greatest employer of labour in the country. The textile trades and crafts are excellently organized and are constantly striving to expand their foreign trade, an aim they are achieving by their concentration on speciality products and the quality of their goods.

The Swiss Industries Fair in Basle has now become an Export Fair, and the fact has been pleasurably received by Swiss textile manufacturers who know only too well the value of personal contact with foreign buyers, especially after a difficult period of involuntary isolation. A Trade Fair must, above all, give every visitor an opportunity to see the best achievements of every branch of industry. For this reason, Swiss fashion products for export have this year been concentrated in the former Watch Pavilion which has been rechristened « Creation and Fashion ».

The first step has now been taken. Let us hope that the second, leading to the final transformation of the Swiss Industries Fair into a great international trade event, will soon follow.

Dr. P. Stein

Director of the Swiss Union of Embroideries Exporters.

The Contribution of the Swiss Textile Export Industries

At the close of the first World War, a group of far-sighted and progressive leaders of Swiss economy founded the Swiss Industries Fair at Basle and thereby obtained a better organization of the market by promoting concentration of supply and demand. Today, after thirty years of constant development and a second World War, we find the same forces at work in an effort to perpetuate this economic organism and to emphasize its purpose and interest. Apart from its great national role, the 30th Swiss Industries Fair will be devoted to the export trade and, to achieve this aim, the Fair buildings have been considerably enlarged and exhibitors grouped together according to the branch of industry they represent.

The *Textile Hall II* has been given an atmosphere of greater uniformity; the large stands formerly reserved for sewing machines and chemical products have been removed and the new provision made in Hall I for exhibits presented by the watchmaking industry has made it possible to satisfy both the requirements of the old « faithfuls » of the textile industry and the wishes of newcomers.

Some of the most representative Swiss firms are exhibiting basic textile products, finished materials and semi-manufactured products. Printed fabrics, neck-wear and knitted goods are lines which have developed prodigiously and will occupy quite an important place. The collective display organized by the manufacturers of woollen materials and carded wool yarns will serve to show the wide range and quality of the products they can offer.

On the left of the Hall there is a special display of the exhibits of the linen industry.

On the right are grouped the stands of the leading *footwear manufacturers* who, apart from taking full advantage of the occasion to advertise their brands, will doubtless also seize this excellent opportunity to establish personal contact with consumers.

The textile trades and crafts which specialize in export are all grouped together in the former *Watch Pavilion* in Hall II. The St. Gall Chamber of Commerce occupies a central position here, for it unites the following organizations: *Association de l'industrie suisse de perfectionnement de textiles*, *Association suisse de marchands de filés et exportateurs de tissus*, *Union suisse des exportateurs de broderies*, *Union suisse des maîtres filateurs, tisserands et doubleurs de coton* (Association of the Swiss Textile Finishing Industries, Swiss Association of Yarn Merchants and Textile Exporters, Swiss Union of Embroidery Exporters, Swiss Union of Master Cotton Spinners, Weavers and Doublers). This stand is surrounded by the collective exhibits of the leading silk and rayon piece-goods manufacturers, the ribbon manufacturers, fabric and footwear producers. The window display of the *Association de fabriques suisses de passementerie* (Swiss Association of Braid Manufacturers) and a few knitwear manufacturers will complete this comprehensive survey of the Swiss textile industries.