

Our cover illustration

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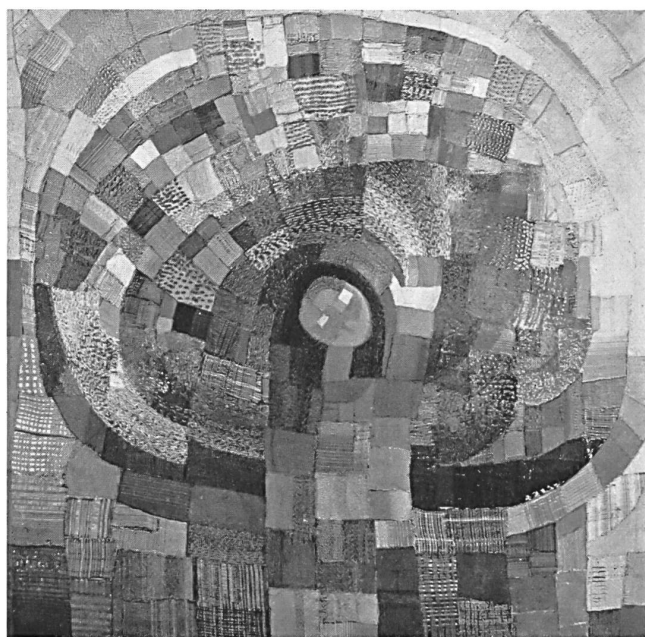
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Our Cover Illustration



All those of our readers who visited the Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne last summer will recognize, on the cover of this number, one of the eleven banners or peasant tapestries displayed in the « Soil and Forestry » sector. This work is not the result of any traditional autochthonous art but represents a recent attempt to give new impetus to folk art by encouraging co-operation between artists and countrywomen, in keeping with the spirit of the Exhibition which aimed to show the « Switzerland of Tomorrow ». At the same time, the work itself, which allowed the tapestry workers considerable scope for expressing their creative gifts and sensitivity, represented a constructive suggestion for a profitable leisure occupation.

From the point of view of the Exhibition, these tapestries were intended to prepare the way for a visit to the different sections in the « Soil and Forestry » sector by drawing the attention of visitors, in both an artistic and striking manner,

to certain problems facing Switzerland's rural population today and summed up in a number of short texts.

The themes having been selected, eleven women artists were asked to illustrate them, each choosing the subject suiting her best. Eleven cartoons were thus made, each of them being entrusted to a group of women who, in close co-operation with the artists responsible for the designs, made the tapestry on a jute ground by the application process. Let us just point out here that the application process is not specifically Swiss ; it is a form of folk art found in all parts of the world and is particularly suited to work of a collective nature. Each banner, measuring just under 6 foot square, represents 300 to 500 hours of work. The search for lengths of fabric, in the light-fast * colours required by the cartoon also represented a by no means simple task.

The success met with by these peasant banners was considerable and there is talk now not only of continuing to display them but also of continuing their production, requests to buy them having reached the organizers from many different sources, and only eleven of the thirty groups of women registered having been actually employed. The trend thus started in the field of folk art by the National Exhibition has therefore borne fruit by giving rise to an activity of great interest from both the social and artistic points of view. The original idea came from Mrs. Marlise Staehelin, the Swiss artist who conceived the general plan and directed the execution of the work as a whole (and who also created one of the eleven cartoons).

The tapestry shown on our cover is devoted to the theme « responsibility of the peasant child ». It was carried out by a group of peasant women in the Canton of St. Gall from a cartoon by Vreni Reusser. This artist, after learning the trade of dressmaker, attended courses at the School of Applied Arts in Zurich where she is at present working for her certificate in the « textile » category. Her tapestry, with beautifully matching colours, a balanced and quietly modulated composition, shows a fine artistic sensitivity.

* Let us mention here, in this connection, the invaluable assistance given by the Moessinger Weaving Mills at Epalinges (Lausanne).