

AUSTRIAN TEXTILE TOUR – July 2014

In July I was fortunate enough to be part of a small group textile tour to Austria. We arrived on the evening of the 5th in Vienna, had 5 nights there before taking a coach to Haslach an der Muhl for a 10 night stay there.



In Vienna we were accommodated in a very central hotel so everything we planned to see was in walking distance. We visited the MAK Museum and had a visit to the textile archives with Dr. Barbara Karl. The group then split up and visited the various galleries displaying textiles etc. I was delighted to see the 'new look' Oriental Carpet Gallery; it has made a huge difference to the feel of the room. The lace gallery takes your breath away, so much beautiful lace on display. There were some really interesting textile samples in the study rooms in the basement where woven and printed samples were on display.

The collection, "Vienna 1900" exhibition is a permanent display of the Arts & Crafts movement in Vienna. The Pae White exhibition Orlegro is a collection of very large tapestry woven pieces and well worth spending some time with.



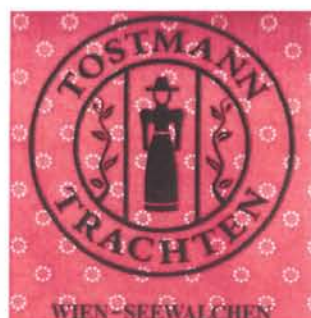
A visit to the Art History Museum is a must. Out of the some 700 tapestries in the collection there are perhaps 10 on display in the exhibition rooms, but they are really worth a look, as are the Egyptian mummy cloths and the Coptic pieces.



Speaking of Coptic, we were fortunate to be able to visit the Late Antiquity (Coptic) textile fragments



archives at the Papyrus Museum. We spent the whole afternoon there with Ines Bogensperger who presented these wonderful pieces - such ancient fabrics and such vibrant colours. Our thanks go to Prof. Bernhard Palme, Director of Papyrus Museum for giving his approval to allow us to see the Archives that were not on display.



One thing that is a must in Austria is to visit a Dirndl shop. We visited Tostmann Trachten and spent the whole morning there with the friendly staff, first looking at the finished garments. The attention to detail, the quality fabrics and the tailoring is wonderful to see, also the colour combinations that are used. We were then taken to the fabric shop and this was an Aladdin's cave for most of us as we can all take a piece of fabric home to make up but we felt we could not take a finished garment home as we would have no where to wear it in Australia. We were also taken on a tour of their archives, beautiful old furniture and garments.

After a free day in Vienna we drove by coach to Haslach stopping along the way at Stift Melk, the Benedictine Monastery overlooking the Danube and then the Indigo Block Printing Museum in Gutau.

Haslach is a small town that was once in the centre of a flax growing region. In early times, every house in Haslach had spinning wheels and looms. They not only grew the flax but spun and wove the fabric. The industrial revolution led to a number of large mills being opened, so everyone went to work at the mills. During the 20th century the mills began to amalgamate and then eventually close. Now there are 3 or 4 small mills in the district still weaving beautiful linen fabric. The building that was once a large mill in the town has been converted to a Textile Centre, with a Textile Museum which takes the visitor from the raw material through the processing of fibre into yarn, preparing the yarn for the loom and then on to the weaving; as part of the complex there is a small weaving mill and a felt mill, a mill shop, teaching rooms, an exhibition space, textile archives and an excellent café/restaurant.

Every July for the past 25 years there has been a Textile Summer School. This is run over 2 weeks and on the middle weekend there is a Weavers Market. The quality of the teaching at the summer school is high and the Weavers Market is juried, so this too is of a very high quality.



From Haslach we visited the Linz Castle Museum Textile rooms and two of the small linen mills near Haslach, Veboeck and Leitner, one using dobby looms, the other using jacquard looms. Another day we drove to Cesky Krumlov for a tour of the Castle with its tapestries and the Castle Theatre and in the afternoon the centre of the town.

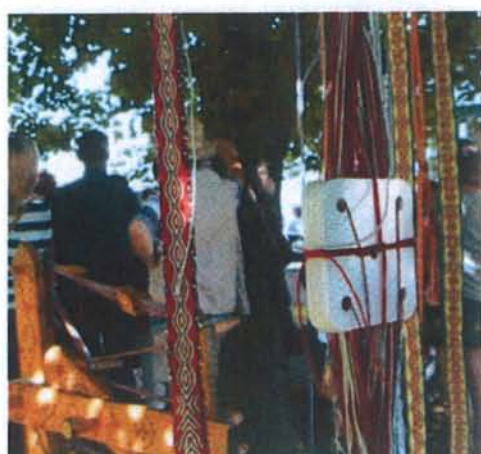


We were given a tour of the Haslach mill museum and textile collection and we were invited to a lecture by Professor Lia Cook and also the opening of the Exhibitions that were part of the Summer School. A very special miniature Japanese Exhibition 'Fein, Klein' was in the main exhibition space and for a few days

the Graduate show from the Linz University Textile Design-Weave students was displayed. This is the first group of students that have worked in this collaborative way on their weave designs in Haslach. It is really good to see as they get to design and sample on small looms but can then work with the loom technicians in the Mill to weave yardage. I for one hope there are many more groups to follow.



The first week of the summer school began and 4 of our group went off to their chosen classes. It is amazing how quickly 5 days can run away but suddenly it was Friday afternoon and we were all assembled at the school to look at the display of what had been achieved during the week - very impressive. That afternoon little tents began to appear along the narrow little streets in Haslach and pop up shops as well.



Saturday dawned bright and sunny and the crowds began to arrive for day 1 of the Weavers Market. What a crowd and what wonderful stalls, a feast for the eyes. Sunday was our last day and yet again it was bright and sunny and very hot! The morning was very busy once more; the afternoon we had to do our packing and climb aboard the coach to the airport for the very long flight back to Melbourne.

Virginia Harrison

For information on the MAK or their collections, The Art History Museum, The Papyrus Museum, Tostmann Trachten, Stift Melk, Indigo Block Printing Museum, Haslach Textile Museum, Haslach Summer School and Weavers Market, Linz Castle Museum, Cesky Krumlov, just put the name into your favourite search engine and you will come up with a wealth of information.