

PRESS RELEASE

WOVEN TALES

TAPESTRIES AND EMBROIDERIES

FROM THE GOTHIC PERIOD TO THE RENAISSANCE

MILAN, GALLERY MOSHE TABIBNIA
7 MAY - 11 JULY 2015

OPENING: 6 MAY 2015, 18:00 HRS

Gallery Moshe Tabibnia is presenting an outstanding exhibition aimed at showing, for the first time to an International audience in Milan, some of the rarest and oldest tapestries and embroideries made from the most prominent textile centres in Germany, France, Belgium, and Italy between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Inspired by such a journey through more than three centuries of the history of textile art is the newly executed publication of: *Textile Art Masterpieces: Tapestries and Embroideries in the Zaleski Collection*, edited by Moshe Tabibnia and Elisabetta Mero, with essays by Nello Forti Grazzini, Chiara Buss, and Gian Luca Bovenzi.

At the Gallery's premises in Via Brera, Milan, nearly forty textile artefacts from the ZALESKI COLLECTION together with pieces from the COLLECTION OF GALLERY MOSHE TABIBNIA will be exhibited. The path of this captivating exhibition will stir memories and imagination about sovereigns and courts the past, when textile art played a major role in the aesthetics of ceremony and in daily life as well.

The newly published volume and exhibition offers a chance to grasp knowledge of the most sought-after types of European textiles, examples of which are preserved in great museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée de Cluny in Paris, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and the Burrell Collection in Glasgow.

From 7 May to 11 July 2015, Gallery Moshe Tabibnia presents 'WOVEN TALES. Tapestries and Embroideries from the Gothic Period to the Renaissance'.

This far-reaching exhibition casts light on the findings resulting from extensive research and study carried out on early European tapestries and embroideries, which can be regarded as masterpieces of textile art for the fairness of their designs and outstanding quality of execution.

Gallery Moshe Tabibnia is in the heart of Milan, within walking distance from the Pinacoteca di Brera and Palazzo Reale, where two displays, 'Il Principe dei sogni – Giuseppe negli arazzi medicei di Pontormo e Bronzino' and 'Arte Lombarda dai Visconti agli Sforza', will be on show during the timeframe of 'Woven Tales: Tapestries and Embroideries from the Gothic Period to the Renaissance'.

The exhibition at Gallery Moshe Tabibnia is structured thematically, chronologically, and geographically, and unfolds into six sections. The first five sections, offering insights into the thematic areas explored within the volume dedicated to the Zaleski Collection. Showcasing fifteenth-century Gothic tapestries from

Switzerland and Germany; Franco-Flemish tapestries woven between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, *Millefleurs*, *Verdure* and *Feuille de Choux* tapestries; narrative and allegorical tapestries dating between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries; and sacred and profane embroideries executed between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The last section inspired by the theme of the EXPO 2015, features textile artefacts which, by way of their subjects and/or original functions, stir some reflection about nourishment in history, and the use of food metaphors for the experience of the divine in different cultural areas.

SECTION 1 – Gothic Tapestries from Switzerland and Germany (15th century)

Amongst Gothic tapestries from Switzerland and Germany are some of the oldest and rarest European pieces of work that have survived. Noteworthy are the examples bearing witness to the culture, traditions, and iconographic repertoire of the German-speaking world, for instance the tapestries depicting the myth of the 'Wild Man' and those with scenes inspired by *Minnesang*, the lyric and song writing tradition that flourished in medieval Germany. Also to mention are the pieces depicting scenes from the Old and New Testament or figures of saints, and those featuring coats of arms.

The designs of these tapestries, which were woven after cartoons drawn by professional painters, are characterised by harmonious primitivism combining expressiveness and grace so that the figures never lack superb quality.

SECTION 2 – Flemish and Franco-Flemish Tapestries (15th – 17th centuries)

From the late Middle Ages all through the age of the Renaissance tapestry making reached its apex, in terms of artistic achievement and socio-economic impact, in the area comprising today's Belgium (from Tournai to Brussels) and north-western France (from Paris to Arras and Lille). Outstanding examples of the production from that area are displayed in this section, including the *Lamentation of the Virgins*, whose origin was recently discovered through scholarly research, and the *Annunciation* woven in Brussels after a cartoon painted by a Flemish artist of the circle of Bernard Van Orley.

SECTION 3 – *Millefleurs*, *Verdure*, and *Feuille de Choux* Tapestries (15th, 16th, and 17th centuries)

In the main exhibition space at the ground floor, Gallery Moshe Tabibnia showcases different tapestries whose original decorative function was accomplished through the display of compositions with a treasure trove of vegetal species. Sometimes set against a background depicting a flowering field, a dense thicket, or a profusion of giant-leaf plants wear coat of arms and/or medallions, human characters and/or animal figures. Testifying to the widespread use of *millefleurs*, *verdure*, and *feuilles de choux* tapestries are several miniatures, easel paintings, and frescoes, also in the Italian milieu. In the refectory of the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, for example, tapestries with floral motifs decorate the foreshortened walls of the fictive environment housing the *Last Supper* painted by Leonardo da Vinci around 1496-1498.

SECTION 4– Narrative and Allegorical Tapestries (16th and 17th centuries)

Shown in this section is a diverse group of tapestries of different provenances and from different places of origin, including Flanders, Germany, and Italy. What these textile artefacts have in common is the late-Gothic style that still permeated their designs at times in which most European tapestries mirrored the 'new' aesthetics of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Episodes from the Bible are represented in a series of four tapestry cushion covers depicting the 'Life of Joseph', whilst the Virtues can be seen in other cushion frontals. Also worthy of interest is the tapestry depicting *David and Bathsheba* as its peculiar colour combination reveals an influence from sixteenth-century German painting and, more particularly, the style of Lucas Cranach the Elder.

SECTION 5– Sacred and Profane European Embroideries (from the 16th century onwards)

Embroidery, encompassing works executed with either wool or silk and silk-and-metal threads, is one of the most elaborate and little known artistic techniques. Historic examples include embroideries destined to the religious sphere (i.e. liturgical vestments, altar frontals, processional standards, and paraments), dignifying embellishments used in civic ritual (i.e. baldachins, flags, and banners), and furnishing textiles (bed sets, towels, table covers, and cupboard carpets).

SECTION 6– Nourishment and the Symbolism of Food in Historic Textile Artefacts

Being unveiled in early May, in harmony with the opening of the **EXPO 2015**, the exhibition 'Woven Tales: Tapestries and Embroideries from the Gothic Period to the Renaissance' also showcases textile artefacts which, by way of their subjects and/or original functions, stir some reflection about nourishment in history and the symbolism of food. In this perspective a few seventeenth-century tapestry table carpets from the Netherlands are displayed at Gallery Moshe Tabibnia in the room overlooking via Brera, along with a seventeenth-century cushion cover in the so-called 'Hamburg' style, a precious English embroidery dating to the sixteenth century, hunting tapestries, and *millefleurs* tapestries. Indeed, these historic pieces are reminiscent of the banquets and other festival occasions associating food and entertainment, which delighted the European nobility since the Middle Ages. Aside from textile artefacts, bearing witness to receptions of that kind are some Flemish paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for instance *The Marriage Feast at Cana* by Gérard David in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Volumes available in the bookshop of Gallery Moshe Tabibnia:

Woven Tales, exh. cat., Moshe Tabibnia, Milan, 2015.

Textile Art Masterpieces. Tapestries and Embroideries in the Zaleski Collection, Moshe Tabibnia, Milan, 2015.

Gallery Moshe Tabibnia

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10:00 -19:00

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