

Arts and crafts from Switzerland

ARTS and crafts developed across the centuries through the manufacture of objects for everyday use still reveal today various influences which know no political boundaries. Arts and crafts from northern Switzerland, for example, are clearly part of the Alpine culture, while a Latin influence dominates in the Tessin. The differences are most marked in the types of motifs and decoration used.

The Embassy of Switzerland in Dhaka, in cooperation with the National Museum has organised an Exhibition of "Arts and Crafts from Switzerland" in order to allow the Bangladeshi people to have some insights into the craft works of Switzerland, and compare them with their own. We give you hereby a brief idea on the arts and crafts from Switzerland and at the same time talk about what you will find at the Exhibition

that is taking place at the National Museum in Dhaka.

Traditional arts and crafts in Switzerland

There are two distinct types of traditional arts and crafts rural and urban. The rural arts and crafts are influenced by the rural way of life; cattle, working the land and the rural lifestyle are the themes most often used in this case. The urban arts and crafts, which reveal the influence of different cultural currents which originated in European cultural centres such as London, Munich, Paris or Rome also left their mark in Swiss towns.

Rural arts and crafts flourished in particular in the areas where the population enjoyed a certain level of freedom and prosperity, attained through either the fertility of the soil or the work people did at home. In contrast, areas characterised by large estates



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owned by the nobility did not produce traditional arts and crafts.

In the 19th century traditional rural handicrafts truly blossomed in the area extending from eastern Switzerland (Appenzell) to the Bernese Oberland and the neighbouring Emmental, a major centre of production of ceramics. The cow, a traditional symbol of prosperity, was a very popular motif for decoration, as were figures dressed in middle-class clothes, demonstrating a certain desire for social betterment.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the rapid industrialisation of many parts of Switzerland resulted in the loss of many aspects of a rich national culture. In contrast to the Scandinavian countries, for instance which made the most of their resources to revive them in modern interior design, Switzerland did not succeed in integrating traditional national popular art into contemporary lifestyle.

In the 1930s, however, Switzerland rediscovered the roots of its handicraft culture, allowing its heritage to blossom once again and enjoy a sort of renaissance a phenomenon which at that time also bore a nationalist note which was not entirely harmless. The Swiss National Exhibition in 1939, however, marked a clear repositioning and an openness towards new ideas.

Today popular art is mainly influenced by the schools of applied art in the larger Swiss towns. New techniques are taught and foreign ideas are welcomed. In fact, contemporary popular art in Switzerland is also flourishing in the wake of major international cultural trends. National or regional motifs and decoration, and typical Swiss designs are used rarely, but with pleasing results.

"Arts and Crafts from Switzerland" Exhibition in Dhaka

At the Embassy, we thought, at a

time when we all are surrounded, in our daily life and work, by merely functional commodities of industrial mass production and synthetic materials, that it would be worth to take a look at our ancestors who lived in a totally different surrounding. We thought that it would be interesting for the people of Bangladesh to have a look at the "ancient" Swiss life, where people used sparkling copper vessels, beautifully carved wooden spoons, artistically woven and embroidered fabrics and so on. Moreover, the visitor will also be able to compare and contrast the handicrafts from Switzerland with the ones from Bangladesh.

The Exhibition, which started on July 29, is taking place at the National Museum gallery in Shahbag, Dhaka. It will continue up to 09 August.

We hope that you will find the arts and crafts from Switzerland interesting.

Switzerland inches closer to EU

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

ber states' national governments to give the package the final go-ahead. The accords should then come into force, and for the EU, at least, the process will come to an end.

But there are still some issues that need to be resolved and which could potentially threaten the success of these landmark agreements. For its part, the EU still has to finish negotiations with other external countries, especially with associated territories such as the islands of Jersey, Guernsey and others.

The question of Switzerland's entry into the EU

The government of Switzerland fixed three preconditions for the commencement of entry negotiations with the EU:

Firstly: Switzerland wishes to gain experience with the ten bilateral agreements of 1999. It wants to see how these agreements will work in practice.

Secondly: The effects on central areas of Swiss statehood of joining the EU must be clarified with absolute certainty, and open questions must be answered convincingly. For example, entry to the EU will in particular affect the Swiss federalism (distribution of responsibilities and competence and collaboration between the federal government and cantons) and direct democracy (people's rights).

Thirdly: There needs to be broad domestic support for the objective of entry. (Abridged)

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Our Heartiest Felicitations to the Government and the brotherly people of Switzerland on the occasion of their

National Day

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