

PRESS RELEASE

GREAT FRENCH TAPESTRIES

17th November 2006 – 28th January 2007

From mid-November the Danish Museum of Art and Design turns the focus on a group of outstanding French tapestries from the latter half of the twentieth century, prompted by a wish to present parts of the museum's rich collections from time to time – normally they cannot be shown in their entirety.

The collection, which includes some of the greatest names of French art such as HENRI MATISSE, FERNAND LÉGER, MARCEL GROMAIRE and the master of Danish art RICHARD MORTENSEN, will be taken out of storage, where the tapestries are normally kept out of consideration for their sensitivity to light.

The spectacular collection has been acquired, with one exception, in France in the 1950s and 1960s in a determined effort to procure for a Danish museum a fine selection from those very years when tapestry was experiencing a successful rebirth after more than a century of decline with slavish imitations of dubious paintings.

With the artist Jean Lurçat at its head, a widespread movement arose during World War II which wanted to restore French tapestry to the basic qualities that had characterized medieval tapestries: close filling-out of the picture surface, a limited number of yarn colours and a coarser structure.

A new and vital monumental textile art arose, made by a succession of France's most prominent artists in close collaboration with workshops in the city of Aubusson and the large manufactories Les Gobelins and Beauvais.

The artists' enthusiasm for creating compositions especially for the textile medium with its rich traditions was soon followed up internationally and encouraged by a growing interest in using decorative tapestries in the new monumental public and private buildings of the time.

In Denmark this new great age of tapestry weaving formed the background for the commissioning from Les Gobelins and Beauvais of a large series of 17 tapestries of Danish history after cartoons by the artist Bjørn Nørgaard over a period of ten years. This series can now be seen at Christiansborg Palace.

In connection with the exhibition we are showing a film by the director and producer Lars Oxfeldt Mortensen made at Les Gobelins in Paris during the production of this large Danish history series. We follow the fascinating process from the dyeing of the yarns to the time-consuming work of the weavers after the artist's richly figured cartoons.

The exhibition marks the publication of the catalogue *European Tapestries 15th -20th Century* written by the former museum curator Vibeke Woldbye

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