Ferdinand Nigg
[1865–1949]

Embroidered Modernism


KUNSTMUSEUM
LIECHTENSTEIN
Introduction

Ferdinand Nigg, born in Vaduz in 1865, was a painter, graphic artist, textile designer, book designer and typographer. Following his training and employment with Orell Füssli in Zürich (1882–1895) and a period of working as a freelance artist in Munich and Berlin, he was appointed lecturer and later professor of book craft and textiles at the progressive school of applied arts and craft professions in Magdeburg in 1903. Hailing from art nouveau, he worked there as a designer at the intersection of the artist's design and industrial production, ahead of the formation of the Deutscher Werkbund. In 1912 he was appointed to the school of applied arts and craftsmen in Cologne, where he was the first incumbent of the newly established chair of Paramentics (ecclesiastical textiles). Nigg also created an extensive oeuvre of drawings and embroidery, mostly out of the public eye, alongside working as a teacher. After retiring in 1931, Nigg returned to Liechtenstein, where he created his late work until his death in 1949.

Ferdinand Nigg is one of the artists who discovered embroidery as an artistic medium at the beginning of the 20th century, harnessing this technique to realise modern design principles. In the recent history of art, increasing importance has been attached to textiles, situated between craftwork and art – particularly with regard to the development of art into the realm of abstraction. Building on cross-stitch as a basic minimalist structure, Nigg arrived at a combination of figuration and abstraction in his embroidered works. The diverse art movements that arose in the first decade of the 20th century – be it expressionism, cubism or constructivism – are palpable in the work of this artist from Liechtenstein. Yet his oeuvre cannot be classified as belonging to any one of these styles, and is instead convincing in view of its distinctive form.

The exhibition is a production of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, curated by Christiane Meyer-Stoll in cooperation with Eva Frommelt-Mengou Tata, Professor-Ferdinand-Nigg-Stiftung.
Ferdinand Nigg’s work, that is almost impossible to date, is a source of fascination, while also raising numerous questions. “Fascination in view of the existential density of his themes, the obviously intercultural diversity of the inspirations, and his characteristic mastery above all in his work with textiles; strangeness because it […] remains difficult to reconcile his main oeuvre with our understanding of classical modernism, that has built up as the impervious sediment of a time of which he was without doubt a contemporary.”

Room 1
Craft processes as the basis of abstraction

The paste paintings and pattern designs were made between 1903 and 1912 when Nigg was a professor at the school of applied arts and craft professions in Magdeburg. He taught his specialised book craft and textile classes eclectically in the workshops for lithography and book printing, hand weaving, embroidery, weaving and dyeing. As Norbert Eisold writes in Über Kreuz mit der Welt. Ferdinand Nigg und Schüler in 2005, “the main emphasis in the experimental development of flat patterns for end-papers or cover papers, furnishing fabrics or wallpapers was on the linocut and its variously modified imprint on a wide range of materials.” The paste paintings and pattern designs fall into these categories, albeit made using different techniques. Whether Nigg showed these works to his class is uncertain, but we may assume that there was some overlap between teaching method, applied and artistic practice, resulting in the works on show here, that were signed by Nigg and treated as separate sheets, i.e. having no more functional purpose. Another factor that will have influenced his work on finding forms was the study of plants introduced by Paul Bernardelli, one of Nigg’s fellow teachers in Magdeburg. Under the microscope, the aim was to generate abstract basic forms from the observation of plant anatomy. Finding a form by means of lining up geometric patterns (repeat), on the one hand, and abstracting basic forms for example from the world of plants, on the other, are an expression of the progressive teaching methods of that time.

The paste paintings display a dominant vertical application of colour with varying spaces in between, with Nigg signing only a single landscape-format sheet (22). For the viewer, this opens up several different layers in the background, only barely visible in Paste painting (12), for example, in the form of two scratches in the top layer of paint. The brush hairs lay lines of diaphanous colour in a tightly woven web of wispy thread lines and harmonious sediments of colour. The resultant structure has the appearance of woven fabric that reflects a quality of meditative contemplation.
The pattern designs appear abstract, although identifiable elements can be discerned. Pattern design for fabric (19) is based on a rocaille ornament that is turned into a (textile) pattern by means of duplication and transformation. Pattern design (17) in contrast seems to display a greatly enlarged knotting technique, visible in the detail, and an animal motif almost hidden in the pattern is the basis for two other pattern designs (16, 18).

Of note is that Nigg draws on the working methods of fabric pattern designs for his pattern designs, with the paste paintings displaying similarities to textile fabric. Compared with the avant-garde movements of his day, Nigg developed an individual approach to ornamental abstraction, and abstraction in general, at a very early stage, a development that evidently arose from craft processes.

1 Stefan Kraus, "Textiler Minimalismus. Ferdinand Nigg und die Virtuosität der Reduktion", in the publication accompanying the exhibition.


3 With regard to his time in Cologne (1912–1931) we know that he made a clear distinction between his artistic work and his teaching.
Room 1
Craft processes as the basis of abstraction

Abbreviations
KFS: Kanonikus Anton Frommelt Foundation, Vaduz
FNS: Prof. Ferdinand Nigg Foundation, Vaduz

1  
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)  
Paste painting on paper 
40 × 26.5 cm  
KFS

2  
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)  
Paste painting on paper 
40 × 44 cm  
KFS

3  
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)  
Paste painting on paper 
40 × 30 cm  
KFS

4  
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)  
Paste painting on paper 
40 × 23.3 cm  
Mezzanin Stiftung für Kunst, Liechtenstein

5  
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)  
Paste painting on paper 
40 × 50.5 cm  
KFS

6  
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)  
Paste painting on paper 
40 × 30.5 cm  
KFS

7  
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)  
Paste painting on paper 
37 × 46.5 cm  
KFS
8
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
40 × 50 cm
KFS

9
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
40 × 50.5 cm
KFS

10
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
40 × 24 cm
KFS

11
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
40 × 27 cm
KFS

13
Pattern design, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
46 × 29.9 cm
KFS

14
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
20.5 × 30.3 cm
Mezzanin Stiftung für Kunst, Liechtenstein

15
Pattern design, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
59 × 45.5 cm
KFS
16 Pattern design (animal repeat), 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
64 × 48 cm
KFS

17 Pattern design, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
46 × 29.9 cm
KFS

18 Pattern design (animal repeat), 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
64 × 48 cm
KFS

19 Pattern design for fabric, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
59 × 45.5 cm
KFS

20 Pattern design for linoleum, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
81 × 51 cm
KFS

21 Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
40.2 × 39.5 cm
Mezzanin Stiftung für Kunst, Liechtenstein

22 Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
40 × 50.5 cm
KFS
24
Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Paste painting on paper
20 × 29 cm
KFS

25
Pattern design, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)
Gouache on paper
58.5 × 46 cm
KFS
Room 2
Figuration and abstraction

The focus in Room 2 is on Ferdinand Nigg’s embroidered work. The exhibits include wall hangings in the style of art nouveau, dating back to around 1905, comprising works right up to the final, unfinished *Francis speaks with the animals* (60) from 1949. The layout is according to different themes. Sketches for embroideries allow us to follow the genesis of the oeuvre in terms of its formal transformation and handling of themes.

One themed section is dedicated to the legend of St George (26–31). Faced with the threat of a dragon, the king enacted a law stating that the sons and daughters of the town be sacrificed to the dragon, with each victim chosen by drawing lots. The lot fell on his own daughter, thus causing the king to struggle with the consequences of this law. The dragon from the legend of St George (29) and The king from the legend of St George (30) show that Nigg follows a similar conceptual composition in his paper works as in his embroidery. The simplified drawing of the figurative elements is clearly visible and redoubled in the final embroidered piece. The king from the legend of St George (30) reveals Nigg’s mastery in reducing and appropriating the grid pre-determined by the base material for the embroidery (canvas). Diagonal shifts and the contrast of black and white suggest depth and folds in the king’s attire. A line appearing to be three stitches too long runs between the middle and last spike of the crown. The crack in the crown that this suggests may symbolise the vulnerability and desperation of the king mourning for his daughter.

As in the legend of St George, depictions of animals, be they menacing or charming, are a central theme in Nigg’s work, as can be seen, for example, in Hunt I, II (32, 33), Hunt for the unicorn (34, 35) and Strange ride (36–38). The light monochrome colours and only partial embroidery allow the background with the preparatory drawing to show through in *Hunt I* and *Hunt II*. The use of cross-stitch is particularly masterful here: in several places the cross-stitches overlap, creating a shimmer that augments the motion of the rosette-like motif of the jumping dogs.

The three wall hangings *Castle view* (48), *Frieze of figures* (49) and *St Elisabeth* (50) are examples of Nigg’s art nouveau embroideries. Their shadowy abstract castle architecture, a recurrent theme in his work, and the towering, curved postures are salient features.

In the group of works *Shepherds saw the star* … (53–55), the process of transformed motifs is particularly evident. A preparatory drawing (56) shows the Magi. A group of figures in
another preparatory drawing (53) may also be seen as an adoration of the Magi. The figure of the dark-skinned Caspar, regarded as a representative of the “Dark Continent” in mediæval times, and the motif of the three figures standing next to each other, possibly embodying the three ages, suggest this interpretation. Caspar was often depicted as a youth, Melchior as a middle-aged man, and Balthazar as an old man. In two other preparatory drawings (54, 55) Caspar is replaced by a Japanese-looking woman. Nigg realised this version as an embroidery. With this version he also adds to the classical canon of portrayals of the Adoration of the Shepherds. Through his work he sought to find common aspects in postures, gestures and facial expressions that transcend cultural difference. The sheets with the newspaper montages in the tabletop showcases (129, 136–138) in Room 3 are evidence of this.

From 1898 to 1903 Nigg lived as a freelance graphic artist and designer in Berlin, referring to himself as a painter in this period. We can only surmise when Nigg began devoting himself to embroidery, as while his works are signed, they are not dated. In 1904 Nigg took on a special class for textiles while teaching in Magdeburg. Later, as a professor in Cologne, this textile class evolved into a specialised class for Paramentics (liturgical textiles).

“Probably as a result of his task as professor of Paramentics” Nigg began to focus increasingly on biblical and religious themes. Using only cross-stitch, he created complex image spaces in his embroideries. A culmination of Nigg’s embroidery is Annunciation (May your word to me be fulfilled) (70). Nigg created this colourful embroidery to mark the 25th anniversary of his mother’s death. The colour scheme in Annunciation (May your word to me be fulfilled) (68) and Annunciation (Ave Maria) (69), in contrast, is reduced to black and white. “To begin with there is the striking contrast of light and dark, or black and white, required and favoured by the emphasis of his early work in printing.”

The embroidery (70) donated by Nigg to the “Maria zum Trost auf Dux” Chapel in 1919 concentrates on the depiction of the Archangel Gabriel, Mary and the dove of the Holy Ghost. The abstract surfaces are richly decorated, with “the crossing and overlapping of rectangular, square and triangular areas and partial areas” lending the whole a diversity of form. In the centre of the picture, the precisely detailed faces of the Archangel Gabriel and Mary stand out from this ornamental pattern. The variety and expressive power of the depiction is astonishing: with the face of the Archangel appearing wholly sculptural and thus contrasting with the flat abstract profile of Mary. The gestures of the hands are equally eloquent.
In this wall hanging we see the culmination of the “resolute will to achieve an abstract mutual penetration of ornament and figure…, whose inspirations are not only to be found in the art of mediaeval times, but also in non-European testimonies, above all in illumination and textile art […].”


6 See Ingrid Riedel, “Die Tier-Mensch-Beziehung bei Ferdinand Nigg”, in the publication accompanying the exhibition.

7 Stefan Kraus (same as note 1).

8 See Rüdiger Joppien, “Stickende Männer. Betrachtungen zum Stickwerk Ferdinand Niggs”, in the publication accompanying the exhibition.

9 Stefan Kraus (same as note 1).
Room 2

Figuration and abstraction

26
Frieze of St George fighting the dragon, undated
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
54 × 272 cm
KFS

27
The king from the legend of St George, undated
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
27 × 19 cm
Private owner

28
St George fighting the dragon (four-part arrangement), undated
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
138 × 93 cm
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz

29
The dragon from the legend of St George, undated
Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper
52.8 × 42.8 cm
Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

30
The king from the legend of St George, undated
Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper
52.7 × 42.8 cm
Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

31
St George fighting the dragon, undated
Wool embroidery on canvas
93 × 97
Private owner

32
Hunt II, undated
Wool embroidery on canvas
86 × 86 cm
Private owner

33
Hunt I, undated
Wool embroidery on canvas
89 × 84.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz
34
Hunt for the unicorn, undated
Mixed media on transparent paper
70 × 90 cm
FNS

35
Hunt for the unicorn, undated
Mixed media on transparent paper
68 × 89 cm
Private owner

36
Strange ride I, undated
Wool embroidery on canvas
70 × 53 cm
Private owner

37
Strange ride II, 1920
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
70 × 53.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

38
Strange ride III, undated
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
92 × 55 cm
Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

39
Fear of the wolf, undated
Ink, watercolour and graphite on paper
67 × 46 cm
FNS

40
Rider on dogs, undated
Graphite on paper
38 × 55 cm
Mezzanin Stiftung für Kunst, Liechtenstein

41
Dogs, undated
Graphite on paper
32 × 60 cm
Private owner
42
**Man and dog**, undated
Ink on squared transparent paper
15.5 × 26 cm
FNS

43
**Man and dog**, undated
Watercolour on paper
35 × 48 cm
Private owner

44
**Strange ride (sketch for chair-back)**, undated
Graphite and watercolour on transparent paper
68 × 53.5 cm
FNS

45
**Strange ride**, undated
Washed ink on transparent paper
64 × 55 cm
Private owner

46
**Strange ride**, undated
Graphite and watercolour on transparent paper
43 × 50 cm
Private owner

47
**Strange ride**, undated
Graphite and watercolour on transparent paper
41 × 56 cm
KFS

48
**Castle view**, c.1905
Wool embroidery on canvas
120 × 160
Private owner

49
**Frieze of figures**, c.1905
Wool embroidery on canvas
115 × 167
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz
50
St Elisabeth, c.1905
Wool embroidery on canvas
237 × 105.5 cm
Private owner

51
St Ursula and St Cordula, c.1905
Wool embroidery on canvas
154 × 118
Private owner

52
Figurine (fragment), undated
Wool embroidery on canvas
41 × 14.5 cm
KFS

53
Shepherds saw the star … (sketch), undated
Graphite, charcoal and watercolour on transparent paper
89 × 119 cm
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz

54
Shepherds saw the star … (sketch), undated
Graphite, charcoal and watercolour on transparent paper
86 × 117 cm
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz

55
Shepherds saw the star … (sketch), undated
Graphite, charcoal and watercolour on transparent paper
38.5 × 65.6 cm
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz

56
The Magi (sketch for embroidery), undated
Mixed media on paper
92 × 62 cm
Private owner

57
Blessed are the peacemakers, undated
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
71 × 79 cm
Mezzanin Stiftung für Kunst, Liechtenstein
58  Adoration of the infant Jesus, undated  
Wool embroidery on canvas  
96 × 95  
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz

59  Shepherds saw the star ..., undated  
Wool embroidery on canvas  
85 × 95  
Private owner

60  Francis speaks with the animals (unfinished), 1949  
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas  
100 × 97 cm  
FNS

61  Francis speaks with the animals (sketch), 1940s  
Ink on transparent paper  
79 × 74 cm  
FNS

62  Francis speaks with the animals (sketch), 1940s  
Graphite on on transparent paper  
73 × 70 cm  
Private owner

63  Wise Virgins (preparatory drawing for braid), undated  
Watercolour and graphite on paper  
110 × 20 cm  
FNS

64  Wise virgins (braid), undated  
Silk and pearl embroidery on canvas  
102 × 28 cm  
FNS

65  Ave Maria (braid), undated  
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas  
118 × 21 cm  
Private owner
66
Ave Maria (braid), undated
Silk and pearl embroidery on canvas
102 × 21 cm
FNS

67
Ave Maria (braid), undated
Silk and pearl embroidery on canvas
95 × 20 cm
FNS

68
Annunciation (May your word to me be fulfilled), undated
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
90 × 106 cm
FNS

69
Annunciation (Ave Maria), undated
Wool and cotton embroidery on canvas
89 × 109 cm
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz

70
Annunciation (May your word to me be fulfilled), 1919/20
Donated to the Dux Chapel “Maria zum Trost” in Schaan by Ferdinand Nigg in memory of his mother
Wool embroidery on canvas
110 × 160
Municipality of Schaan
Drawing cabinet
‘[…] Nigg gives the appearance of an unconventional loner outside the realm of modern art, who created his works not for the purpose of public presentation and discussion, but rather in order to deepen his own spiritual salvation.’10 Homeless (76) shows a figure in front of a barren, precipitous mountain face with a hermitage growing out of the rock that is reminiscent of the Metéora monasteries in Kalambaka in Greece. Or may this be a reference to Gutenberg Castle in Balzers in Liechtenstein, rebuilt by his cousin Egon Rheinberger? Could a self-portrait lie hidden in this piece? This raises one of the many different questions posed by Nigg’s oeuvre, namely, to what extent biographical occurrences are interwoven with historical events. The theme of mourners is notably recurrent. The person being mourned is not depicted in the groups Lamentation under the cross (83–87) and Lamentation of Christ (93–94). The focus is above all on weeping women and angels directly facing the viewer (87). As a citizen of Liechtenstein, Nigg was not conscripted into the two World Wars. Not only did he learn of accounts of the First World War from numerous letters of his students, he himself lived in Cologne, a centre of logistics for the West Front and nascent aerial warfare. His involvement in the events of the Second World War are evidenced by newspaper pictures in his estate, for example depicting Cologne or Munich in ruins. Are these traumatic events reflected in his choice of motifs?

Blueprints
Blueprints and linocut prints were used to create reproductions of designs and patterns in the textile industry. Nigg also made use of these techniques, as shown by a selection of blueprints with filet embroideries (96–100) of different motifs. To create the blueprint, also known as a cyanotype, the textile templates were placed on photosensitive paper and exposed. “These templates are inspired by the ‘model books’ published in Italy, France, Germany and Switzerland since the 16th century. Nigg’s designs with putti, people and animals are artistically executed and have almost nothing in common with the idealising templates of his time, instead recalling the language of the Renaissance and its grotesques. Like the cross-stitch works, filet embroideries were originally used for table and bed linen and underclothes. As recently as the 20th century, however, they were mainly used for ecclesiastical textiles.”11

The Deutscher Werkbund exhibition of 1914
The Deutscher Werkbund exhibition opened in Cologne on 16 May 1914, shortly before the outbreak of war – a 350,000m² showcase for modern design in architecture and contemporary manual and industrial production. Nigg, an official member of
the Werkbund since 1908, was involved in furnishing the Relaxation Room of the Colour Show, whose building was designed by the architect Hermann Muthesius. The goal of the Colour Show was to compare the diversity of manifestations of colour in nature with those of industrial production, for example the “Real Colours” developed by the Bayer works in Leverkusen. The Relaxation Room, for which Ferdinand Nigg designed the textile furnishings, was also part of the show. Drawing (105) and the drawings in the showcase (130) are his designs for the textile motifs in the wall panels there. The throw and decorated cushion cover show fabrics used for the furnishings. Other design drawings belong to this context (106, 107). It was the last time Nigg would exhibit publicly.

10 Rüdiger Joppien (same as note 8).
11 Cf. Ursula Karbacher, “Der Kreuzstich als künstlerische Aussage”, in the publication accompanying the exhibition.
Room 3

71  
Jesus in Hell, undated  
Graphite, watercolour and gold paint on washi  
62.5 × 45 cm  
FNS

72  
Collage with head, undated  
Charcoal and watercolour, collaged, on paper  
30.5 × 24.3 cm  
FNS

73  
Black Madonna with child, undated  
Mixed media on washi  
60 × 40 cm  
FNS

74  
Black Madonna with child, undated  
Mixed media on hand-made paper  
60 × 41 cm  
Private owner

75  
Mary with child, undated  
Mixed media on paper  
27 × 13 cm  
KFS

76  
Homeless, undated  
Graphite and watercolour on paper  
50 × 39 cm  
Private owner

77  
Do not fear, undated  
Graphite, watercolour and gold paint on paper  
48 × 39 cm  
Private owner

78  
They saw the star …, undated  
Graphite, watercolour and ink on paper  
52 × 85 cm  
Private owner
79
They saw the star …, undated
Graphite, watercolour and ink on paper
38 × 18 cm
Private owner

80
Group of figures, undated
Graphite and ink on paper
55 × 43 cm
Private owner

81
Seated and standing figure, undated
Graphite on paper
29.5 × 22.5 cm
FNS

82
Figured abstraction, undated
Coloured chalk on transparent paper
57 × 50 cm
Private owner

83
Lamentation under the cross, undated
Graphite, ink and watercolour on transparent paper
47 × 52.5 cm
FNS

84
Lamentation under the cross, undated
Graphite, ink and watercolour on transparent paper
40 × 51.5 cm
KFS

85
Lamentation under the cross, undated
Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper
40 × 45 cm
FNS

86
Lamentation under the cross, undated
Graphite, ink and watercolour on paper
44 × 58 cm
Private owner
87
Lamentation under the cross, undated
Graphite, ink and watercolour on paper
52 × 40 cm
Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, Vaduz

88
Mater Dolorosa, undated
Graphite and watercolour on hand-made paper
33 × 17 cm
Mezzanin Stiftung für Kunst, Liechtenstein

89
Lamentation of Christ, undated
Graphite, watercolour and gouache on washi
37 × 50 cm
FNS

90
Entombment, undated
Graphite, watercolour, ink and coloured pencil on transparent paper
40 × 50 cm
FNS

92
Lamentation of Christ, undated
Graphite and watercolour on paper
28 × 19.5 cm
FNS

93
Lamentation of Christ, undated
Graphite and watercolour on transparent paper
28 × 19.5 cm
Private owner

94
Lamentation of Christ, undated
Graphite and watercolour on transparent paper
60 × 42 cm
FNS
95
Christ in the mandorla, undated
Graphite and watercolour on transparent paper
46 × 46 cm
Private owner

96
Blueprint of a filet embroidery, undated
Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis: ut digno et
competenter annuntiem evangelium suum
(The Lord be in my heart and on my lips that I may worthily
and fittingly proclaim His Gospel)
Blueprint and graphite on paper
74 × 82 cm
KFS

97
Blueprint of a filet embroidery, undated
Blueprint on paper
100 × 131 cm
KFS

98
Blueprint of a filet embroidery, undated
Blueprint on paper
85 × 91 cm
KFS

99
Blueprint of a filet embroidery, undated
Blueprint on paper
42 × 190 cm
KFS

100
Blueprint of a filet embroidery, undated
Four kings (Amraphel of Shinar, Arioch of Elassar,
Chedorlaomer of Elam, Tidal, King of Goyim), undated
Graphite on hand-made paper
61 × 92 cm
FNS

101
Four kings (Amraphel of Shinar, Arioch of Elassar,
Chedorlaomer of Elam, Tidal, King of Goyim), undated
Graphite on hand-made paper
61 × 92 cm
FNS
102 Hunting motif (sketch for fabric), 1912–1931
Graphite on transparent paper
47.5 × 156 cm
FNS

103 Throw with geometric ornament, c.1914
Motif for textile furnishings of the Relaxation Room, Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne 1914
Wool embroidery on canvas and linen
157 × 213.5 cm
Private owner

104 Cushion cover decoration with geometric ornament, c.1914
Motif for textile furnishings of the Relaxation Room, Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne 1914
Wool embroidery on canvas and linen
57 × 65 cm
FNS

105 Sketch for fabric for the Relaxation Room, Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne 1914
Mixed media on paper
57.5 × 68 cm
Liechtensteinische Landesbank AG

106 Design for textile, Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne 1914
Coloured chalk on transparent paper
54 × 45 cm
Private owner

107 Design for textile, Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne 1914
Coloured chalk on transparent paper
37.5 × 35 cm
Private owner

108 Architectural-geometric composition, undated
Graphite and coloured pencil on paper
13 × 14 cm
KFS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Acquisition</th>
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<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>13 × 13.5 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
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<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>13 × 13 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>12.5 × 13.5 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>14.5 × 14.5 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>22 × 15 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>14 × 14 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>16 × 14.5 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Architectural-geometric composition, undated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphite and coloured pencil on paper</td>
<td>20.5 × 16 cm</td>
<td>KFS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tabletop presentations

The overview of Ferdinand Nigg’s versatility continues in the showcases, illuminating his holistic oeuvre, consisting of embroideries, drawings, book illustrations, hand-bound covers, magazine cover designs, graphical commissions, commercial textiles, and paraments. Nigg was also a passionate collector, not only of sculptures, graphic reproductions and books (dating back to the 14th century), but also owned a substantial collection of textiles. One showcase is dedicated to this collection, in which we can also present for the first time a number of loans of previously unknown pieces from Private owners.

Textile collection

“It is no surprise that Ferdinand Nigg, a professor of textile design and Paramentics, collected textiles. Planned collecting of historical textiles and textiles of outstanding craftsmanship from all over the world began in the latter half of the 19th century, motivated by a fast evolving industry thanks to the invention of spinning machines, Jacquard looms, embroidering machines, and chemically manufactured dyes and further developments in textile printing. This required visual aids in order to study and use materials, technique, style, decoration and ornamentation. … The collections thus created served both as collections of templates and patterns for the industry and as visual aids for craft lessons.”12 Ferdinand Nigg’s textile collection (118) gives a remarkable overview of the textile craft, reaching far back to the pre-industrial age. Ursula Karbacher, curator at St. Gallen Textiles Museum, is in charge of categorising Nigg’s pattern collections into fabric fragments (17th to 19th century), lacework and fragments of household textiles and accessories (16th to 19th century), and embroideries (18th to 20th century). The showcase contains examples of fabric fragments which Nigg himself mounted on card along with examples of lace.

Paraments

The parament designs (liturgical textiles) and the actual vestments form an important part of Nigg’s work. Nigg limits himself in them to “a very elementary form of embroidery whose structure is geared to the base material to be embroidered. The structure of the latter, in turn, results from the weaving technique and the vertical warp and horizontal weft threads. […] Nigg thus very clearly follows the Werkbund ideal of truth to material. By reducing his technique to cross-stitch, he consciously turned away from the embroidery of past centuries.”13 As a member of the Deutscher Werkbund, Nigg strove to counter mass textile production with modern, sophisticated design standards, for example in palls (altar cloths), designs for chasubles (outer vestment) and braids (decorated part of the outer vestment) (119–121). As the first holder of the chair in
Paramentics, during his time in Cologne (1912–1931) Nigg influenced the design of liturgical textiles, with his students carrying on this style-defining work for decades.

Newspaper cuttings
Nigg built up an extensive collection of newspaper clippings that were preserved as loose cut-outs or mounted on card in his estate. He used them as a preliminary stage, akin to a sketchbook, and as a study for his works. A small selection of the more than 250 sheets is presented in four showcases (129, 136, 137, 138). At the top left (136), recumbent figures and swarms of animals combine to create ornamental formations reminiscent of the abstract hand-bound covers (131, 132) or pattern designs (13, 18). At the same time, they also testify to Nigg’s penchant for unusual perspectives. Other references can be derived from the collages with various depictions of dogs, be it in the pack, be it sprinting, or in maternal attention (136) for the works (40–44), the mourner (136) for the Lamentation under the cross (85–87) or the multifarious riders (138) for the Strange ride works (36–38, 44–47). A comparison of depictions from different cultures evinces Nigg’s fundamental interest in comparative studies, with the artist investigating typologies commonly found across cultural boundaries, thus enabling him to question and/or expand existing image traditions. Unusual (cultural) compositions in the newspaper clipping montages continue, for example, in the works Shepherds saw the star… (53–55) and Black Madonna with child (73, 74).

Hand-bound covers
The hand-bound cover designs also fall into the category of commissioned works. Hand-bound covers are exclusively hand-made book covers. Based on a holistic approach to design, Nigg designed covers in gouache, paste paint or linocut printing (131–134). The designs exhibit varying degrees of abstraction and are partly based on an underlying grid, with the aid of which the artist transferred dentil decorations and architectural, abstract and figured patterns (133, 134) onto paper or, in some cases, leather.

Title pages
Prize competitions paved the way for Ferdinand Nigg when he was setting up as a freelance designer in Berlin in 1898. Competitions aimed to renew craftwork and applied art in view of increasing mass-produced goods were a burgeoning phenomenon of the day. They were held by publishers or on behalf of companies in the newly founded magazines at the turn of the century, for example Jugend, Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration, Kind und Kunst, Innendekoration, among others. Nigg first attracted attention with his designs for the title page of the magazine Deutsche Architekturwelt in 1898, for which
he was awarded a first and second prize. The title page design for *Innendekoration* featured on several issues of the magazine as of 1903. He is known to have designed title pages until 1925, for example his illustration for an issue of *Neue Märchen* (1921) or *Parzival* (1925) (140, 141).

12 Ursula Karbacher, “Gewebe, Spitzen, Borten. Eindrücke, Überlegungen und Gedanken zur Textilsammlung von Ferdinand Nigg”, in the publication accompanying the exhibition.

Tabletop presentations

Filet embroidery (see blueprint No. 96)
Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis: ut digne et compe-
tenter annuntiem evangelium suum
(The Lord be in my heart and on my lips that I may worthily and
fittingly proclaim His Gospel)

Fabric, lacework and braiding
Examples from Ferdinand Nigg’s textile collection

Ornaments and designs for chasubles
(paraments)

Drawings, embroideries and watercolours c.1900
(art nouveau)

Examples of early drawings

Embroideries

Designs for embroiderys

Commercial art for cigar boxes
(Commissioned works for Julius Jahl)

Ex-libris
(for Max von Boehn)

Tablecloth
(for Norbert Langer & Söhne)
Examples of image collection
(newspaper clipping montages)

Sketches and embroideries for fabric for the Relaxation Room
Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne in 1914

Pattern designs for hand-bound covers

Two jacquard fabrics
(designs)
Two repeats with houses on leather and fabric
(designs and finished art)
Abstract embroidery

Embroideries and works on paper with the theme of man and animal

Book covers
(designs and finished art)

Reading table
Opening
Thursday, 10 September 2015, from 6pm

Public guided tours
Thursday, 24 September 2015, 6pm
Thursday, 29 October 2015, 6pm
Thursday, 17 December 2015, 6pm
Thursday, 21 January 2016, 6pm

Take Away (short guided tour)
Thursday, 29 October 2015, 12.30pm
Side programme

Tuesday, 29 September and 10 November 2015, 2–4pm
Art 60 plus
with Doris Fend
No registration required. Cost: museum admission (CHF 10.–)

Sunday, 4 October 2015, 11 am
One Hour
Ferdinand Nigg und die Geschichte des Textils
with Fabian Flückiger

Wednesday, 14 October and Thursday, 15 October 2015, 2–5pm
Holiday studio
for children from 6 to 12

Sunday, 25 October and 22 November 2015, 2–5pm
Family afternoon
A Sunday excursion in the world of art

Thursday, 5 November 2015, 6pm
Lecture
by Rüdiger Joppien
In cooperation with Liechtensteinische Kunstgesellschaft

Thursday, 26 November 2015, 6pm
On the 150th birthday of Ferdinand Nigg
Presentation of the publication
Ferdinand Nigg (1865–1949). Gestickte Moderne
Lecture
Die Mensch-Tier-Beziehung bei Ferdinand Nigg
by Ingrid Riedel
In cooperation with Liechtensteinische Kunstgesellschaft

Thursday, 3 December 2015, 6pm
Presentation
Ferdinand Nigg mit den Tieren – eine Portfolio-Edition
by Manfred Naescher

Sunday, 6 December 2015, 11am
One Hour
Zur Bildsprache Ferdinand Niggs
with Christiane Meyer-Stoll

Thursday, 14 January 2016, 6pm
Lecture
Ferdinand Nigg. Eine kleine Spurensuche
by Evi Kliemand
Exhibition architecture
Uli Mayer and Urs Hüsy (Dipl. Architekten ETH SIA, Triesen)
In cooperation with Daniel Biedermann

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