

Ferdinand Nigg
[1865–1949]

Embroidered Modernism

11 September 2015 – 24 January 2016

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."¹

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."² 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,³ 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.

2 Norbert Eisold, *Über Kreuz mit der Welt. Ferdinand Nigg und Schüler. Magdeburger Jahre 1903–1912*, Magdeburg 2005, p. 21.

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 × 50 cm

KFS

11

Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)

Paste painting on paper

40 × 24 cm

KFS

12

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

Pattern design for fabric, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)

Gouache on paper

59 × 46 cm

KFS

22

Paste painting, 1903–1912 (Magdeburg period)

Paste painting on paper

40.2 × 39.5 cm

Mezzanin Stiftung für Kunst, Liechtenstein

23

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.⁴ **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 medieval 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 dated⁵. 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”⁶ 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.”⁷

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”⁸ 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 [...]”.⁹

4 Cf. Christina Lehnert, “Hände als Hauptdarsteller. Die Geste als zeichnerhafte Übersetzung emotionaler Bewegtheit”, in the publication accompanying the exhibition.

5 Regarding Nigg's years in Cologne (1912–1931) cf. Rüdiger Joppien, “‘Man wird hochgehoben und fallen gelassen’ – Ferdinand Nigg und Köln”, in: Evi Kliemand, *Ferdinand Nigg. Wegzeichen zur Moderne. Bildteppiche, Malerei, Graphik, Paramentik*, Bern 1985, pp. 265–281.

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

Room 3

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

91

Entombment, undated

Graphite and watercolour on transparent paper

40 × 41.5 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 digne 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

Blueprint on paper

92 × 103 cm

KFS

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

109

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

13 × 13.5 cm

KFS

110

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

13 × 13 cm

KFS

111

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

12.5 × 13.5 cm

KFS

112

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

14.5 × 14.5 cm

KFS

113

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

22 × 15 cm

KFS

114

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

14 × 14 cm

KFS

115

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

16 × 14.5 cm

KFS

116

Architectural-geometric composition, undated

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

20.5 × 16 cm

KFS

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 lino-cut 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.

13 Cf. Isabelle Berger, "Ferdinand Nigg. Vollender der Werkbund-Ideale in der Paramantik", in the publication accompanying the exhibition.

Tabletop presentations

117

Filet embroidery (see blueprint No. 96)

Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis: ut digne et competenter annuntiem evangelium suum

(The Lord be in my heart and on my lips that I may worthily and fittingly proclaim His Gospel)

118

Fabric, lacework and braiding

Examples from Ferdinand Nigg's textile collection

119

Ornaments and designs for chasubles

(paraments)

120, 121

Sketches and embroidered palls

(paraments)

122

Drawings, embroideries and watercolours c.1900

(art nouveau)

123

Examples of early drawings

124

Embroideries

125

Designs for embroideries

126

Designs in linocut printing for filet embroideries and design for "Jugend" 1918

127

Early designs for embroideries

128

Commercial art for cigar boxes

(Commissioned works for Julius Jahl)

Ex-libris

(for Max von Boehn)

Tablecloth

(for Norbert Langer & Söhne)

129, 136, 137, 138

Examples of image collection

(newspaper clipping montages)

130

Sketches and embroideries for fabric for the Relaxation Room

Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Cologne in 1914

131, 132, 133, 134

Pattern designs for hand-bound covers

135

Two jacquard fabrics

(designs)

Two repeats with houses on leather and fabric

(designs and finished art)

Abstract embroidery

139

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

140, 141

Book covers

(designs and finished art)

142

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, 11am

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

Sticken – eine Kunst der Männer? Betrachtungen zum Stickwerk Ferdinand Niggs und anderer Künstler des 20. Jahrhunderts

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

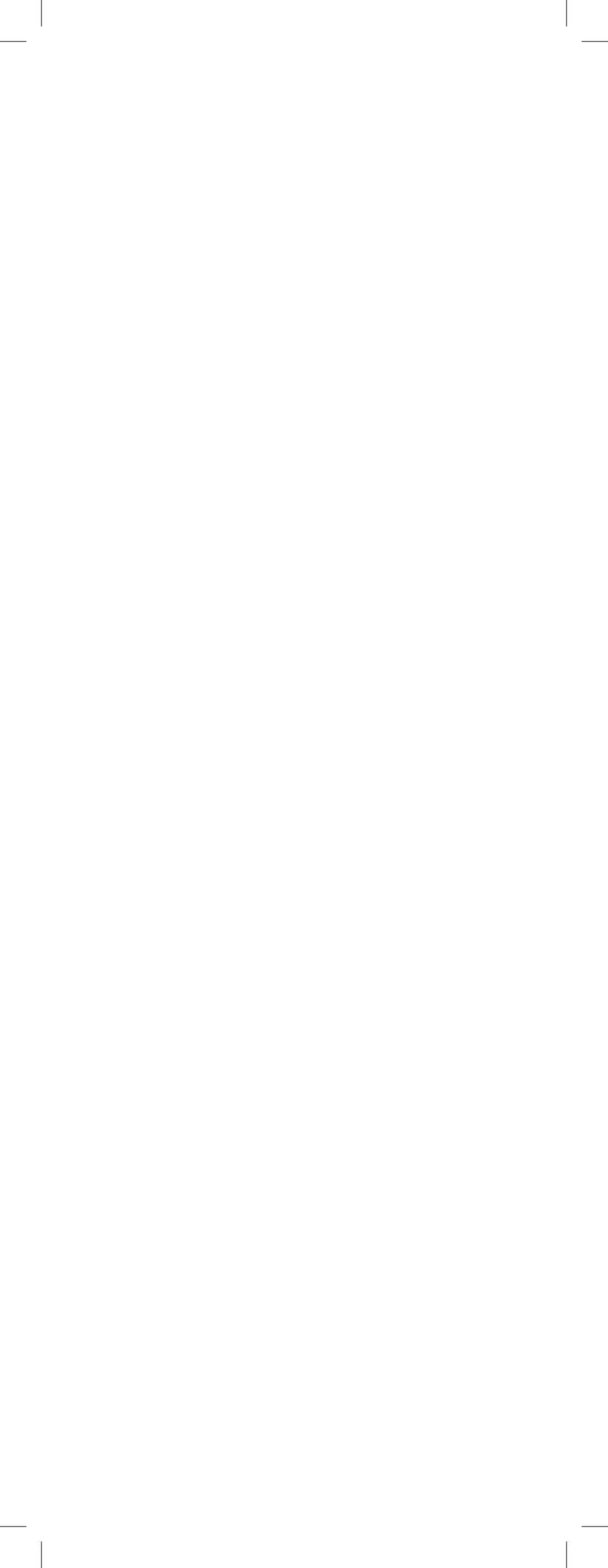
Thursday, 14 January 2016, 6pm

Lecture

Ferdinand Nigg. Eine kleine Spurensuche

by Evi Kliemand





Exhibition architecture

Uli Mayer and Urs Hüssy (Dipl. Architekten ETH SIA, Triesen)

In cooperation with Daniel Biedermann

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Editor

Fabian Flückiger

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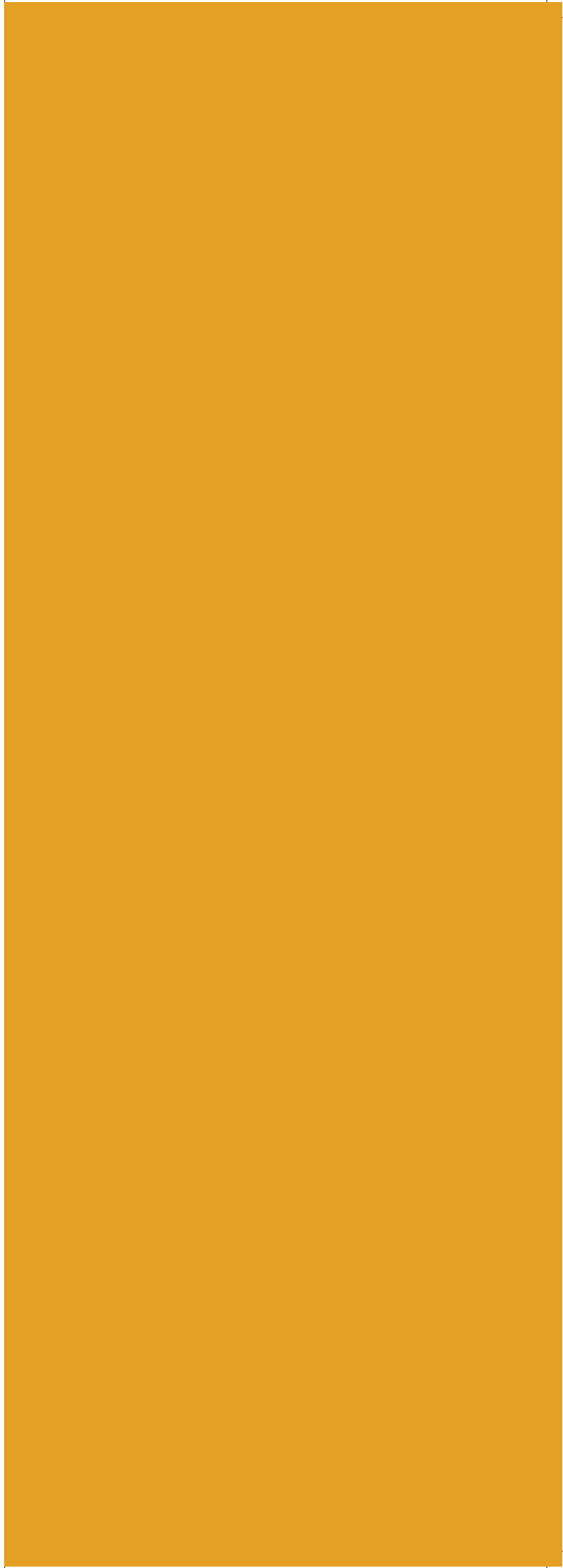
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