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Autor: [s.n.]
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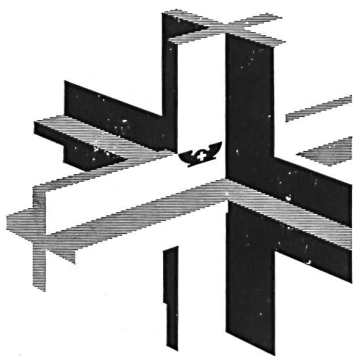
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Switzerland's Oldest Export Industry at the 1965 Swiss Industries Fair

For about half a century the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle has been the place where Swiss trade and industry have annually been displaying their high-quality products in an impressive show lasting for eleven days. It is here that supply and demand come together under ideal conditions, manufacturers and resellers meet as trade partners, here the experienced manufacturer and businessman comes into immediate contact with the consumer whose wishes and customs are, after all, very largely responsible for determining the successful sales outcome already at the wholesale trade level. As an all-round common effort by industry and trade, the Swiss Industries Fair annually attracts thousands of buyers and resellers anxious to obtain the latest information about new trends of development in the Swiss economy. Something like 100,000 foreign visitors from 112 different countries came to Basle in 1964 with a view to visiting the industries fair. The total number of visitors amounted to almost 900,000. Hence, although when considered from the viewpoint of the exhibitors and the goods offered, it is strictly speaking a purely national display, the number of visitors registered makes it quite clear that the Swiss Industries Fair ranks with the other large international fairs on a footing of equal importance. This naturally means that the goods displayed at the big springtime fair in Basle arouse great interest amongst trade experts from foreign countries. From the point of view of the Swiss economy the industries fair in Basle has become a first-rate instrument for the promotion of sales and as an effective medium of publicity. What is the framework within which the Swiss textile industry will make its appearance at the 49th industries fair due to take place from 24th April to 4th May 1965?

When the fair started as far back as 1917 the exhibition space available was only some 86,000 sq. ft. At the present time, after completion of the big new Rosental building with its four storeys for display purposes, there are altogether 25 imposing halls in which the exhibition space available covers 1,750,000 sq. ft. This enabled the fair management to continue on a much broader basis the rearrangement of the trade groups, which was started some years ago, for the forthcoming fair. For example, the presentation of most of the groups offering goods of everyday consumption will be carried out in a much more compact manner.

On the ground floor of the Circular court building, in addition to gas and electrically fired domestic apparatus, space has been found for all the large-scale types of household machines and complete kitchen equipments of every shape and size. The ground floor will also house the groups dealing with refrigeration, the fitting out of shop premises, and machines for the various lines of foodstuffs.

On the second floor visitors will be able to find, in 1965, all kinds of household requisites and small-scale domestic apparatus including porcelain ware and artistic ceramics. The trade group for toys, which used to be placed in the halls situated behind the administrative building, also finds here new and more extensive display space in keeping with its requirements. Following established practice, the stands offering foodstuffs and beverages, including the tasting of a wide range of Swiss wines and other drinks, will be found in the remaining part of the top floor.

However it is on the first floor, so to speak at the very heart of the Circular Court building, that the textile group will be found with its special displays and, in immediate proximity, there will be the stands showing footwear and leather goods, furniture and home furnishings, musical instruments and books, thus emphasising the close economic influence these branches of industry exert on each other.

The textile industry is the oldest export industry in Switzerland, and it forms one of the outstanding displays of the entire fair. Its importance for the Swiss economy can easily be traced if by nothing more than the annual export figures recorded and which, in 1961, had already exceeded a milliard Swiss francs. Since then they have not stopped rising and, in 1963, with its exports valued at 1.12 milliard francs, the textile industry ranked fourth after the metal industry, the chemical industry and the watchmaking industry.

Participation by the Swiss textile and clothing industry at the Swiss Industries Fair consists, and has done so for years, in a display the fascinating atmosphere of which has become so familiar that it is simply impossible to think of the fair without it. In the course of the years two quite separate conceptions have become established as happy complements of each other: on the one hand the display by individual manufacturers of their goods on separate stands and, on the other hand, the more thematically arranged community displays where the different branches of the trade join together in presenting joint displays of the products of the textile and clothing industries. It is the interplay between the two of them that establishes the attraction exercised by the entire trade group on the majority of the consumers and of the resellers and experts. This is where it becomes clear that, while the actual amount of business transacted at the fair could no doubt be calculated in hard cash, it is the other aspects such as prestige, effectiveness of publicity and direct contact with consumers which constitute those elements the real value of which would only be ascertained once they were suddenly no longer present.

The special display «Creation» is distinguished by the atmosphere of extreme elegance to be found there. The latest lines of goods produced by the silk, woollen, cotton and embroidery industries arouse general admiration. The well-balanced decorative effect obtained by clever use of oversize photo enlargements of typical views of Paris enhances the allround impression without, however, in any way detracting the visitors' attention from the objects displayed.

All the export sections of the Swiss clothing industry are to be found represented in the special «Madame et Monsieur» show presented by the export association of this particular industry.

There is a third special display, the «Knitwear Centre», where the manufacturers of knitted wear of all kinds present an extensive production programme fully justified by its wide variety. In contrast with the first two special displays already mentioned, the knitwear centre is a condensed presentation of individual stands all of which, however, seek to exhibit their goods in keeping with the uniform idea behind the aims of the fair. The Swiss Association of Knitwear Manufacturers has a special information centre at the fair where visitors can readily obtain all the information they may require about this particular industry.

The forthcoming industries fair will be an occasion for those exhibitors, representative of the Swiss textile industry, to offer convincing evidence of the wide range of new ideas put forward by the fashion designers, and of the already well known high standard of processing technique achieved, as demonstrated by the very large selection of raw materials of which use is made and the varieties of finish adopted. The same comment that applies to visitors in the other industrial sections is equally applicable to trade experts in the textile and fashion goods lines: a visit to the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle will be well worth your while!

Swiss Industries Fair Basle 24th April - 4th May 1965

Blaise Bron

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