





MERCURIUS HANDS OVER THE INFANT BACCHUS TO THE NYMPHS

Workshop of Jacob van der Borcht, Brussels, c. 1700. Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest
Woven from wool and silk using the Gobelin technique; density of the warp: 7/cm; size: 442x309cm

Among the tapestries exhibited by the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, 'Mercurius Hands Over the Infant Bacchus to the Nymphs' is an example of tapestries made around 1700. It is one of eight-piece series, entitled 'Depictions from Mythology'. The best-known literary treatment of the story of Semele - and the one that was the most popular in the Baroque age - is to be found in Ovid's work *Metamorphoses* (Bk III. , 287-315). According to the story, Semele, the mother of Bacchus - god of the grapes, wine and ecstasy - implored Jupiter to appear before her. Jupiter granted her request, but the celestial light that surrounded the god scorched her. Jupiter tore the unborn embryo from its mother's womb, keeping it in his leg until Bacchus was born. Later, and this is the scene depicted by the tapestry, Jupiter sent his messenger, Mercury, to take the boy to the Nymphs living in the Nysa region, with instructions that they should bring him up. In the centre of tapestry we see Mercury in a red tunic, a winged helmet and sandals, handing over the infant Bacchus to two nymphs, and in the background is their cave overgrown with wine-tendrils. In front of this is the table, laden with food and jugs. To the left, Silenus is enjoying the cool of a stream. In the foreground of the composition, we can see some smaller bushes as well as a child, who is suckling milk from a goat. The bordure contains bowls of fruit and garlands of flowers. In each of the bottom corners there is a monkey grasping wine stock, and in each of the top corners there are two parrots. The colour scheme is especially rich: we find numerous shades of red, green, blue, yellow and brown on the tapestry. In the middle of each horizontal sides there is an owl, lion and dog. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Brussels weaving was largely under the influence of the Manufacture des Gobelins in Paris. This showed in a liking for mythology and allegorical themes; the figures portrayed in antique costumes, the landscapes reflecting the influence of Poussin and Claude Lorrain and the vivid colouration all attest to French influence. One of the most productive cartoon drawers of the time was Louis van Schoor (1666-1726), who was the designer of this series of tapestries. He based his work on woodcuts by Jean Doughet and Jean Versini that were made using Nicolaus Poussin painting depicting the birth of Bacchus.

Emőke László: *Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Tapestries Based on Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' from the Museum of Applied Arts*. Budapest, Karpit 2 (cat), Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, 2005. pp. 24-25



ILDIKO DOBRANYI FOUNDATION

A non-profit organisation with the aim of representing, supporting and protecting the woven tapestry, which started to live a new life at the turn of the Millennium due to the teaching work of Noemi Ferenczy and gained international fame because of the work of Ildiko Dobranyi (1948-2007). The foundation, which is driven by the advisory board comprising experts and artists, has the role of maintaining Hungarian and foreign contacts, but also to enlarge the current professional network with the leading actors of the local and foreign art scene, professional organisations, institutions and art forums.

HUNGARIAN CULTURE BRUSSELS (HCB)

The building of the Hungarian Culture Brussels (HCB) was opened on 5th of December 2004, which beyond the traditional roles of the Hungarian cultural institutions, aims to effectively represent Hungarian culture in its full diversity. The centrally located HCB is a meeting point of artists, politicians and EU representatives, where they can discuss their views in our reading corner or at special events as well. Through this, actors of the Hungarian cultural scene can formulate and channel a more coherent message in a city, which is primarily important in the EU decision-making process. A remarkable period will be when together with Spain and Belgium, Hungary will deal with the EU presidency for 18 months. During the first six months of 2010 Spain will have the EU presidency, than in second half of 2010 Belgium, and in the first half of 2011 Hungary will hold the EU presidency.



“...the classic art forms, to which we have already bidden farewell a countless number of times, live on despite all our expectations, actually drawing new strength from this and securing for themselves new liberty’.

Hans Belting

THE WEB OF EUROPE / *Contemporary Paraphrases of an Eighteenth-century Brussels Tapestry*

In the year of Hungary’s EU presidency, the Hungarian Cultural Institute of Brussels and the Ildiko Dobranyi Foundation wish, with the help of a jointly made tapestry entitled ‘Web of Europe’, to direct attention to a cultural asset, the art of woven tapestry, a part of which is the 20th-century tradition linked to the name of Noemi Ferenczy. The genre was first able to become a significant art form in Medieval Europe, despite the fact that in the course of history tapestries have been made in cultures as distant in time and space as fifteenth-century Peru or fourth-century Coptic Egypt.

The Hungarian Cultural Institute in Brussels and the Ildiko Dobranyi Foundation are inviting tapestry artists from Europe to take part in ‘Web of Europe’. The aim of this is to find an answer to the question of what this ancient, traditionally collective genre means, and can mean, for us in the twenty-first century, since woven tapestry in the European tradition was for centuries the outcome not of the work of an independent artist, but of co-operation between a designer (who was generally a famous painter), a cartoon drawer, and weavers. The technology that struck root in Medieval Europe evolved a branch of weaving which could enter into a close connection with fine art, and which reached one of the peaks in its development in Brussels in the 1500s.

As the starting point for the joint work entitled ‘Web of Europe’, we have chosen the eighteenth-century Brussels tapestry ‘Mercury Hands over the Infant Bacchus to the Nymphs’ held by the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest. This we have asked the artists to re-interpret. In other words, everyone can, on the basis of a composition containing twenty-seven part-elements of the tapestry, re-think and re-weave a particular area he or she has selected. The hope is that in this way dialogue and long-term professional co-operation can be established between tapestry artists in the European Union, which consists of twenty-seven states.

We await works in which tapestry – which through its ancient ‘language’, namely weaving (which is also capable of integrating possibilities concealed in the very latest image-creating techniques), maintains links with the classic tradition – features as a contemporary medium.

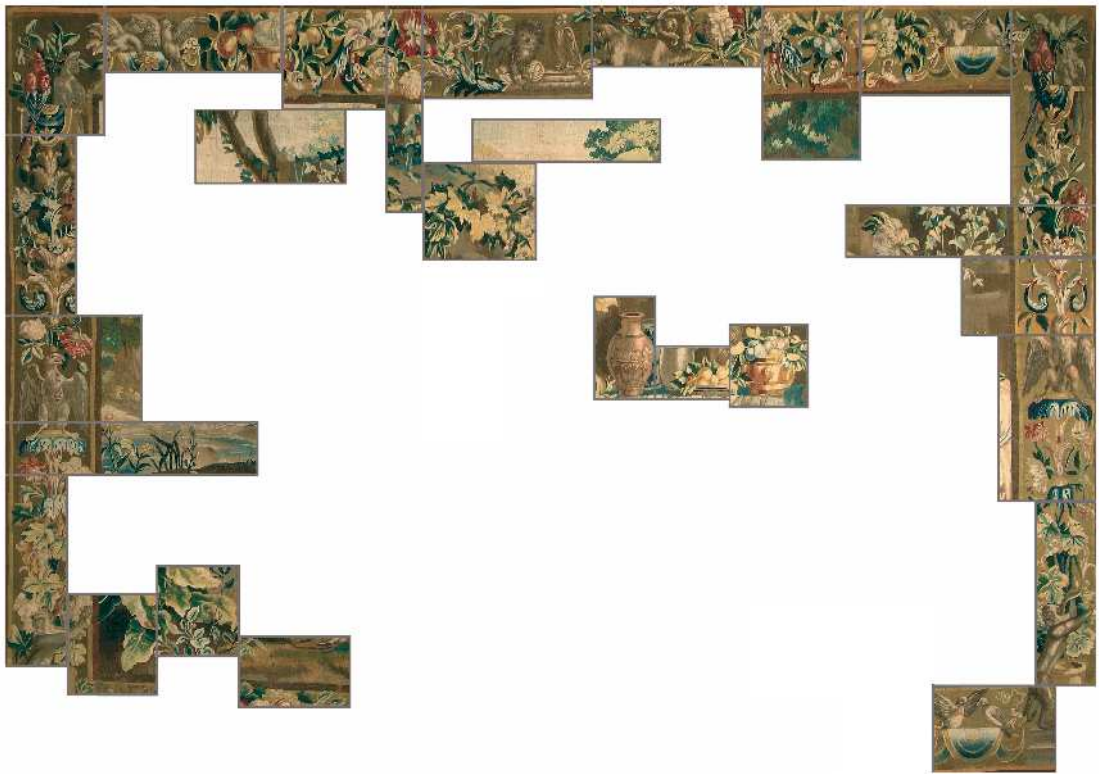
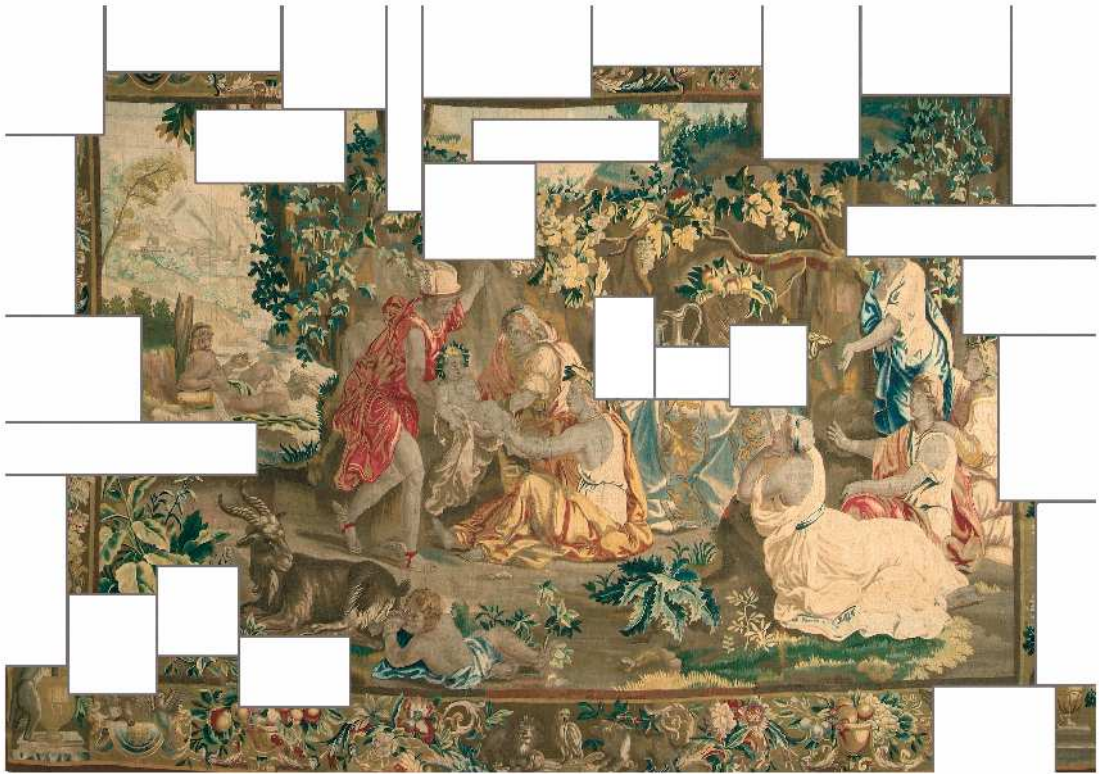
The historical tapestry and its paraphrases will, along with the creation process, be shown as an installation in 2010 in museums in Brussels and Budapest. A multilingual catalogue will be made which as well as presenting the professional conception behind the installation and the work of the artists invited, will contain documentation relating to the realisation process and theoretical studies connected with the project.

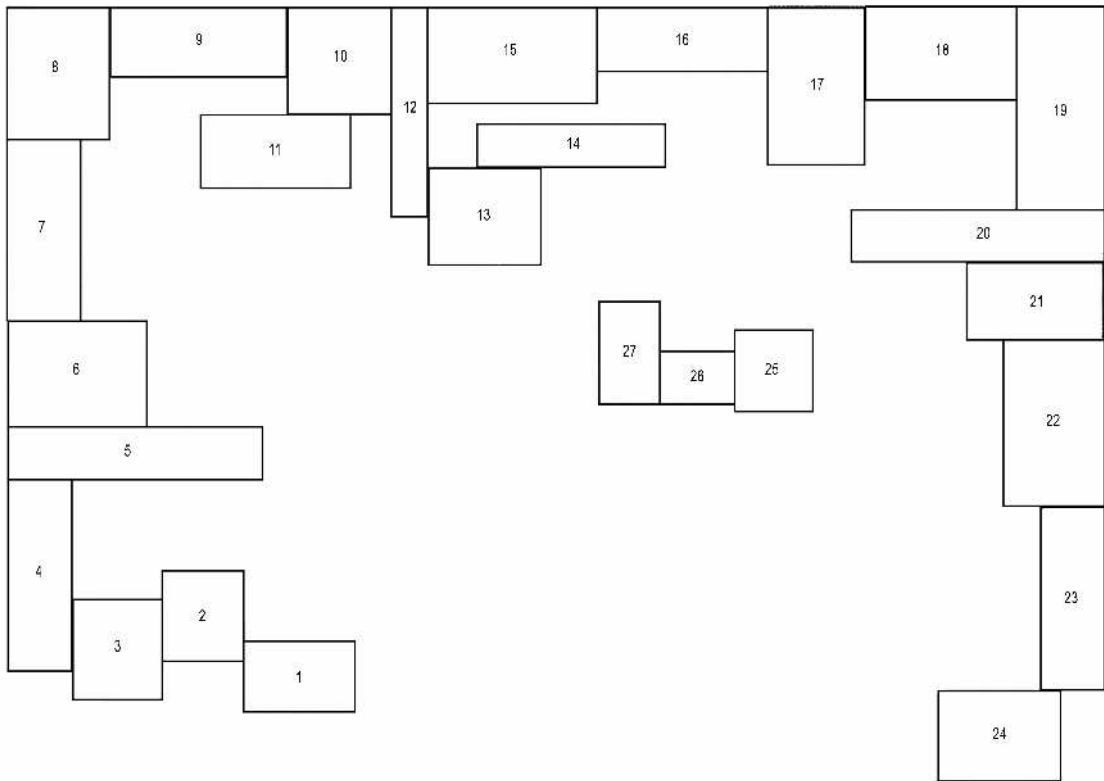
Miklós Mojzer

President of the Advisory Board, Ildiko Dobranyi Foundation, Budapest

György Petőcz

Cultural Counsellor, Hungarian Culture Brussels, Brussels





1. Detail: 45,5x28,5cm



2 Detail: 33,0x36,5cm



3. Detail: 36,5x40,5cm



4. Detail: 26,5x77,0cm



5. Detail: 102,5x21,5cm



6. Detail: 56,5x42,5cm



7. Detail: 30,0x73,0cm



8. Detail: 41,0x53,5cm



9. Detail: 72,0x28,0cm



10. Detail: 41,5x43,5cm



11. Detail: 60,0x30,0cm



12. Detail: 14,5x84,5cm



13. Detail: 45,5x39,5cm



14 Detail: 75,5x17,5cm



15. Detail: 68,5x38,5cm



16. Detail: 69,0x26,0cm



17. Detail: 39,0x63,5cm



18. Detail: 61,0x37,5cm



19. Detail: 36,0x82,0cm



20. Detail: 102,5x21,0cm



21. Detail: 55,0x31,5cm



22. Detail: 41,0x67,0cm



23. Detail: 26,0x74,5cm



24. Detail: 49,5x33,5cm



25. Detail: 31,5x33,0cm



26. Detail: 31,0x21,5cm



27. Detail: 24,5x41,5cm