

Château de Prangins.

Château de Prangins. MUSÉE NATIONAL SUISSE. SCHWEIZERISCHES NATIONALMUSEUM. MUSEO NAZIONALE SVIZZERO. MUSEUM NAZIONALE SVIZZERO.

**INDIENNES.
UN TISSU
À LA CONQUÊTE
DU MONDE
DÈS LE 08.05.21**



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Château de Prangins.

MEDIA KIT

Chintz. How a Fabric Conquered the World

From 8 May 2021

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This media kit, as well as HD images of the exhibition, can be downloaded from www.chateaudeprangins.ch/indiennes.

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Chintz. How a Fabric Conquered the World

From 8 May 2021

1 MEDIA RELEASE

Chintz. How a Fabric Conquered the World

The new permanent exhibition *Chintz. How a Fabric Conquered the World*, which opens at Château de Prangins on 8 May, interweaves local and global history and considers Switzerland's links to the wider world. It sheds light on the involvement of many Swiss people in key chapters of the modern period, including industrialisation, the triangular trade, colonisation and slavery. The exhibition forms part of the new Chintz Centre, which also comprises a study room, a bed of dye plants in the kitchen garden, and a wide range of natural dyeing workshops.

Traders in Geneva importing fabrics from India to sell in Bordeaux, from where they are sent on to Brazil to be used as clothing for African slaves. Merchants in Basel setting up in Nantes to better fund and combine cargoes for the slave trade. Officers from Neuchâtel in the service of the powerful Dutch East India Company. Swiss plantation owners or managers making use of slave labour. These histories and many more besides are just a few aspects of the fascinating yet extraordinarily complex saga of chintzes: printed cotton fabrics that are regarded as the first ever global product.

The new exhibition allows visitors to retrace the evolution of chintzes across four continents, exploring their impact on the various places where they were produced and consumed. The journey leads from India to Brazil via Switzerland, France and western Africa, emphasising the Swiss presence and role at every stage. Indeed, in many places around the world, on different scales and in different ways, people from Switzerland helped either directly or indirectly to write the story of chintzes. This is an engrossing account of fashion and globalisation: a tale of imitation, prohibition, industrial espionage and contraband.

A study room adds an extra dimension to the exhibition, with information on manufacturing techniques, the iconography of chintzes and the productions of various factories. Meanwhile, a wide range of complete natural dyeing courses offers a hands-on experience of the world of chintz.

The new Chintz Centre at Château de Prangins takes a global and interdisciplinary approach to a fascinating area of cultural history and enables visitors to better understand some of the issues of globalisation, both yesterday and today.

For further information, contact

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2 THE CHINTZ CENTRE

Historians regard chintzes – dyed, painted or printed cotton fabrics originally produced in India (hence their French name “indiennes”) – as one of the first ever global products. By the early centuries of the modern era, they have already conquered far-away markets in South-East Asia and Africa. Following the great explorations and the opening up of new seaways, the first chintzes begin to arrive in Europe. Thanks to their immense success they are widely imitated, sometimes prohibited, and often coveted.

With the help of some one hundred cloths, objects and documents as well as numerous films and interviews with historians in Switzerland France, Senegal, the United States and Brazil, the exhibition retraces the story of a fabric that truly conquered and revolutionised the world. A constant theme throughout is the participation of Swiss people.

Indeed, chintzes are one of Switzerland's great success stories. In the 18th century, the cotton industry is one of the chief drivers of the economy, and printing cotton fabrics provides a living for entire regions, especially in the French-speaking part of the country. This is explored in the exhibition through cloths and archive documents as well as a multimedia presentation created in association with the *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, offering an unprecedented overview of chintz production in Switzerland during the 18th century. The chintz industry also places the country at the heart of the European and global economy. The exhibition includes, for instance, samples of striped cotton made in Switzerland that are identical in every detail to those used to clothe African slaves transported to Brazil. It reminds us that Swiss people, in various ways, played a role in the triangular trade and slave trade, both of which are intimately bound up with the history of chintz.

Given its history, Château de Prangins is an especially appropriate location to tell the story of chintz. Louis Guiguer, who had the château built in the 1730s, belonged to an extensive network of Protestant bankers, financiers and merchants who, among other things, controlled the import channels for colonial goods and were involved in the chintz trade. Indeed, fabrics of this kind are mentioned in the inventories of assets belonging to the barons of Prangins. They were used as wall hangings, curtains or furniture coverings. For an idea of how they fitted into a noble interior during the Age of Enlightenment, visitors can explore *Noblesse oblige!*, a recreation of the reception rooms at Château de Prangins completed in 2013.

For detailed information on the exhibition and cultural mediation activities, visit <https://www.chateaudeprangins.ch/indiennes>

Scientific consultants

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Interviews in the exhibition with

Sadakne Baroudi, Thomas David, Mohamadou Dieye, Bouda Etemad, Bettina Giersberg, Aziza Gril-Mariotte, Bernard Jacqué, Reto Jenny, Benjamin Jody, Sibyl Kindlimann, Robert Labhardt, Helen Oplatka, Prasannan Parthasarathi, Xavier Petitcol

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3 TOPICS TO EXPLORE IN RELATION TO THE EXHIBITION

- **Globalisation**

Forming part of the triangular trade and consumed in Asia, Europe, Africa and America, chintzes are considered to be the first ever global product.

- **The beginnings of the consumer society**

Available at a wide range of prices and qualities, chintzes give rise to the consumer society we know today. They allow the public at large to follow fashion, and blur the previously clear boundaries between the different classes of society.

- **Swiss people around the world**

As early as the 17th century, many Swiss people played a leading role in the chintz trade and industry internationally.

- **Cotton: a fibre that revolutionised the world**

For more than a thousand years, cotton was one of the world's leading industries. Without it, the Industrial Revolution could never have taken place. In Switzerland too, "King Cotton" dominates to the extent that in the late 18th century, the country becomes the second biggest cotton-producing region in Europe after Britain.

- **Swiss involvement in slavery and slave trading**

Closely linked to the triangular trade, the history of chintzes also reveals the involvement of many Swiss people in the slave trade.

- **Fashion and interior design**

Chintzes have made a lasting impact on fashion, both in furnishings and clothes, since the 17th century. To this day, many artists and fashion designers draw inspiration from "toiles de Jouy" and the foliage swirls typical of chintzes.

- **Techniques and skills**

Originally from India, the techniques for manufacturing chintzes were appropriated, copied, adapted, transformed, mechanised and perfected in Europe – where they have now almost entirely disappeared, while enjoying a renaissance in India.

- **Chintzes: a medium in their own right**

Before the advent of illustrated newspapers and photography, chintzes deal with current topics and notable events in the political, cultural or social life of their era.

- **The textile industry and fast fashion**

The impact of chintzes on the 17th- and 18th-century world has some parallels with today's textile industry, dominated as it is by fast fashion and the drive for profit at all costs, to the detriment of workers.

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4 Madder and Indigo. Natural Dyeing Workshops

Directly linked to the Chintz Centre, the natural dyeing workshops approach the topic from a theoretical and practical perspective. In particular, they are a chance to learn about and try out traditional techniques, focusing in particular on the 18th century.

They are aimed at everyone, from those with no prior knowledge to more advanced learners wishing to explore the historical background to their experiments in dyeing. Each workshop deals with a different topic, but participants are welcome to attend single events only.

16.06.21	08:30-12:00	Dyeing with wild flowers
26.06.21	13:30-17:00	
07.07.21	08:30-12:00	The magic of blue with various indigo plants
17.07.21	13:30-17:00	
18.08.21	08:30-12:00	From camomile yellow to madder red: the warm colours of summer
28.08.21	13:30-17:00	
06.10.21	08:30-12:00	Walnuts, ivy and onions: ink and dye recipes
06.11.21	13:30-17:00	
19.01.22	08:30-12:00	Scents of the forest: dyeing with mushrooms and lichens
29.01.22	13:30-17:00	
09.03.22	08:30-12:00	Making silk from nettles! Working with fibres
26.03.22	13:30-17:00	

All the workshops will take place at Château de Prangins and will be offered in French and English. They are intended for adults. Reservation required: online or by calling +41 (0)22 994 88 96.

Price: CHF 70 per person and workshop, including all materials and a coffee break.

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5 PUBLICATION



The catalogue of the 2018 temporary exhibition *Chintz. How a Fabric Changed the World!* is still available. This lavishly illustrated work of reference offers an overview of the history of chintzes, highlighting the role played by Swiss people in this flourishing industry. The catalogue section includes introductions to the main factories and production sites in Switzerland and France, extensive analyses of the cloths, and thematic presentations.

Chintz. How a Fabric Changed the World!

In French, published by La Bibliothèque des Arts, approx. 240 pages, approx. 200 illustrations in colour. Price CHF/€ 49 (not including postage and packing).

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The publication is on sale in the museum shop or can be ordered from info.prangins@museenational.ch or by calling +41 (0)22 994 88 90.