

A Trip to Poland – a report

Until the end of September I knew Poland only as a spot that could be pointed to on a map, or from news items on TV. For me, Poland was a large country to the East, with expansive forests, lots of nature, welcoming people and colourful quilts...

And that is how I experienced it when travelling through the country by train: birch forests stretching all the way to the horizon, people, whose remarkably fresh and original quilts were a delight to look at, and a degree of hospitality that stunned me. It was a trip to

„quilted nature“

But let's start at the beginning.

In August our President Barbara Lange received an invitation from the President of the newly established Quilters' Guild of Poland, Magdalena Galinska. This invitation, which also included the Quilters' Gilde of Czechia, suggested that we participate in an exhibition with 10 Quilts, and the theme of the exhibition would be „quilted nature“, from Oktober 1 through Dezember 31, 2016 at the center for natural studies in Zielona Góra/Poland.

There was not a whole lot of discussion amongst board members as to whether we would accept the invitation. And it was quickly decided that I would be the one to bring the quilts to Poland.

Unfortunately it was too tight a time period to publish a regular call for entries. However, our tireless editor of the magazine, Thomas Gretscher, was very helpful in selecting previously existing quilts from pictures in the archives of the magazine. These needed to meet the conditions of the Polish Guild, and our own condition, that the maker of the quilt should also be a current member of the German Guild. This preselection was the basis for Barbara Lange's final selection, to which she added two further current works so that we were able to present a representative overview of current German quilts and textile art concerned with this topic. And what a wonderful selection she came up with!

This is the list of selected quilts and their makers: Marion Caspers „Jahresquilt 2010“, Heidi Drahota „Homage to the Birch“, Monika Flake „Geäst“, Heidi Förster „(Die hängenden Gärten von) Semiramis“, Jacqueline Heinz „Earth“, Wiltrud Kühhirt „Bauerngarten“, Gabriele Latz „Coral Reef“, Heidemarie Mönkemeyer „Traum der Gartenschürze“, Elsbeth Nusser-Lampe „Dandelion“ and Beate Schaake „Feng Shui-Garten“.

On September 30, with all quilts securely wrapped and packed up, I started my train journey from Cologne via Berlin to Swiebodzin, where I was met at the station. In Zielona Góra the quilts were eagerly awaited, which was recognizable in the fact that large tables had been prepared for unpacking and a number of helpers was present to quickly arrange them on the wall. I was particularly impressed with the solution of using party pavillons for hanging, on which fabric had been stretched. I will take note of this idea and use it when necessary.

The exhibition was even advertised on local radio and TV. For the opening Dr. Krystyna Walinska, director of the museum was present as well as were members of the Polish Quilters' Guild. Anna Polak, Marshal of Province Lubuskie is the patron of the exhibition. We had live music at the opening, coffee and cake and – what seems to be typical for Poland, but I had never experienced something like this before – a certificate of attendance. Words of greeting from several people, and I was grateful that my little speech was translated into Polish, thank you to Magdalena for that. Already on the first weekend a steady stream of visitors came to see the exhibition, and we are optimistic that that is a good indication for the remainder of the year.

And after all this narrative, I would like to say something about the quilts themselves. Certainly the presentation of so many quilts in these spacious and well-lit halls is a great

opportunity, for the quilts as well as for the center of natural studies. These are my impressions ...

Almost impossible for us to imagine, Zielona Góra is the Polish capital of vineyards. After the opening I had a little time to take a look around and kept coming across little statues of Bacchus as I was walking through the inner city, each of these statues different from the others, and very original. Breslau and its dwarfs were always on my mind.

In the evening approximately 30 quilters from the local group and the Polish Guild assembled and we had a most interesting conversation. I had to answer a lot of well interested and thorough questions, and Magdalena and the spokeswoman of the local group did a wonderful job of translating. I was most impressed with the commitment and interest that the quilters displayed in all their questions, and how they knew exactly what kind of information they needed to get on with their young Polish Guild, as for example organizational matters, fabric supply etc.

My report that the German Guild had been founded by a few members in the 1980s as they were sitting around a kitchen table, and that the photos in the first issues of the magazine had to be glued into the magazines by hand. That is something that will be a lot easier for the Polish Guild as publishing on the internet is so much easier and will substitute for a printed magazine. On the other hand, the lack of an attractive magazine might be felt in trying to attract new members, which is certainly an asset for the German Guild.

Before they let me go I was surprised with a huge bag of goodies „for the girls in Germany“ and will gladly pass these out to the artist who sent their quilts to Poland.

Until January the German quilts will be in Poland before returning home from „quilted nature“ and will then be sent back to their owners - together with a certificate. And I do hope that the Poles will come and visit us. I am certain we will find a common topic worth quilting about ...

Ulla Hoppe

Translation by Dr. Uta Lenk, Int. Representative of the German Guild

Bildunterschriften:

- Foto 1 Polisch Quilts ... horses in flight ...
- 2 ... after a Mosaic...
- 3 The „quilting queen“ and her colleagues
- 4 ... are offering a play on hide and seek ...
- 5 ... in a confetti technique ...
- 6 ... that is well liked by smaller visitors ...
- 7 + 8 Bacchus
- 9 a view into the exhibition
- 10 ... light as a feather ...
- 11 Magdalena, justifiably proud.