

HANDICRAFT TRADITIONS IN DAUGAVA RIVER VALLEY TERRITORY

The Gatherings or „suprātkas“ as they are called in Latgale is an ancient household tradition where people used to gather in the evenings and work together as well as relax. These were mostly quiet meetings filled with storytelling, but sometimes it was a fun way of spending time with dancing, singing and playing games. At these gatherings women and young girls used to do their chores – knit, wove, crochet and sew. Therefore „suprātkas“ were known as evenings where women made different items to fill their dowry chests with in preparation for marriage. The exhibition presents a small part of such traditional bridal dowry made by local handicrafters.

The honour and pride of a Latgalian woman is the woven blankets, tablecloths, belts and knitted patterned gloves and socks. The significance of traditional handicrafts in the Latgalian farmstead daily life and in festivity is reflected in this exhibition.

White linen **towels** symbolized the world as a whole. They were widely used in everyday life and feasts. Towels were hung in the place of honour or used under the served festive food. The most popular and widespread towel decoration at the end of the 19th century were monograms embroidered with red threads in cross-stitch. But in the 1920s towels with multicoloured and very bright floral patterns were made in Latgale.

Latgilians adorned themselves with various **belts** from the cradle to the grave. It was a sign of blessing for the newborn baby, a bright decoration for the wedding and an integral part of the funeral ritual. The territory of the Daugava river valley from the 19th century until the end of World War I and in the interwar period is characterized by two kinds of belts represented in the exhibition.

Latvians worked wearing gloves (worker gloves) and used peculiarly decorated patterned gloves during the holidays and visiting the church (honorary gloves). Patterned **gloves** and **socks** were widely used in the traditional annual rituals, and it was also a beautiful gift since long ago. Gloves decorated with the traditional Latvian sign “Ūsiņš” brought success for travellers.

The “star” pattern was most widely used in honorary gloves. Maidens' socks were luxurious and patterned, but for lads they were simple and decorated with stripes. Men's socks were decorated with the traditional Latvian signs “Ozoliņš” or “Aka” (“Oak” or “Well”) which gave the wearer strength and energy.

In this exhibition the practical significance and place of handicrafts in the farmstead is demonstrated by the patterned woven **bed covers** and **sheets** as well as beautifully embroidered **pillowcases**. The accent of the interior of the peasant room – the bright woven **carpets** made of coloured rags – were covered over the whole room, creating a picturesque feeling of the overall space integrity.

The unifying element of traditional handicrafts in the exhibition is the **dowry wardrobe**, which symbolically depicts the woman's work ethic, sense of beauty and the wealth of the peasant farmstead. The ambience of antiquity in the peasant farmstead during “The gatherings” is created via the exhibition's virtual part – the songs of the local Naujene folklore group “Rūžēņa” and the visualization of the scenes from the rural life and old crafts in Latgale farmsteads in 1927 photographs.



EXHIBITION GUIDE

EXHIBITION

"POTTERY TRADITIONS IN DAUGAVPILS REGION"



PROJECT ENI LLB-1-216
"NEW LIFE OF OLD CRAFTS"

Pottery in Latvia was developed mainly in two regions – **Latgale** and Kurzeme. However, only in Latgale it has survived to the present days and forms one of the brightest features of the traditional culture, which is included in the Latvian culture canon.

Pottery of Latgale is characterized by two development lines – practical and decorative. The **practical pottery** has been developed over several thousand years by making the utensils for farmstead needs. The exposition is characterized by such household utensils as pots for cooking and food storage, milk, honey and jam pots, bowls, cups and mugs.

Decorative pottery or 'making ceramics' came into use at the beginning of the 20th century. The brightest examples in the exhibition are candlesticks, whistles (clay whistles in the form of an animal, bird, or mythical creature), vases, beer mugs, salt shakers, vases and flower pots.

The exposition represents household utensils made by Latgalian potters from the end of the 19th century till the first half of the 20th century, which were purchased by the residents of the Naujene Parish at fairs in Juzefova, Višķi, Izvalta or from travelling merchants, as well as the authorworks of the grandmaster Andrejs Paulāns and potters Lilija Zeiļa, Juris Krompāns and Voldemārs Voguls, who are well-known in Latgale today. Special attention in the exhibition is paid to the ceramics purchased within the project – **20 household utensils** made by **Valdis and Olga Pauliņi**, which clearly reflect the pottery traditions of the Daugava valley.

On the basis of the exhibitions, the museum pedagogical program "**Traditional craft skills in the Latgale farmstead**" was developed. We invite students, youngsters, adults and seniors to participate in the program! Pre-registration required! The youngest museum visitors are welcome to the interactive children's play zone in the exhibition 'Handicraft traditions in the Daugava river valley territory'. Children can also get acquainted with ancient craft skills using a workbook, which is easily available on the museum's website www.naujenesmuzejs.lv.



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