

THE '30s

Tapestry at the Tournai Academy of Fine Arts



Rodolphe STREBELLE (Tournai, 1880 - Uccle, 1959)

Le Doudou de Mons, 1936

Painted sketch

Collection of Wallonia-Brussels Federation - Deposit

Between the two world wars, interest in the decorative and applied arts was revived, particularly under the influence of the Bauhaus school (1919-1933). The Belgian pavilion at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1937 featured four monumental tapestries commissioned by the public authorities and woven at the Royal Manufacturers in Mechelen and Brussels, including ***Le Doudou de Mons*** by **Rodolphe Strebelle** (coll. House of Commons, London).

Painter and engraver, author of cartoons for tapestry and stained glass, **Rodolphe Strebelle** created a second version of *Le Doudou*, whose painting sketch served as a model for the tapestry. This tapestry, woven in 1986 by the TAMAT workshop, can be seen in the hall of honor of Tournai Town Hall.

Against this backdrop, **Léonce Pion**, director of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, initiated a course in haute lice tapestry, reviving an ancestral craft in Tournai. The looms were equipped with pedals to facilitate weaving. **Fernande Dubois**, a renowned licrière, became the first teacher in 1931.

(FOCUS - vitrine)

Fernande Dubois (Brussels, 1880 - Brussels, 1949) and the tapestry workshop of the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Tournai

Born into the Brussels bourgeoisie, Fernande Dubois first came to prominence in 1899 as an embroiderer on silk, then as a tapestry-maker. Her tapestry work on the monumental carton ***Vers l'idéal*** (Towards the Ideal) by Symbolist painter **Constant Montald**, which lasted 12 years (1908-1920), earned her a resounding success. Admired by Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, exhibited in New York (American Art Gallery), the tapestry was featured in the Belgian pavilion at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1925. A public subscription organized by the State enabled the work to be offered to Prince Leopold, future King of the Belgians, and Princess Astrid on the occasion of their wedding in 1926.

A renowned licentiate, **Fernande Dubois** was called upon to teach the art of high lice in Tournai, with great success; as witnessed by the participation of several of her students at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1937 and at the exhibition devoted to the cities of Tournai and Antwerp at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1941.

Rare témoignage de cette époque, L'arbre aux oiseaux a été tissé par **Louise Henneton** sur un carton de **Paul Minot** de l'Académie de Mons. Les deux noms sont mentionnés sur la tapisserie, qui porte également la marque de Tournai. Après ses cinq années de formation (1936-1941), couronnées par de nombreuses distinctions, prix et médailles, **Louise Henneton** (Tournai, 1902 - Tournai, 1967) travaille dans l'atelier jusqu'à la retraite de **Fernande Dubois** en 1948. Elle tisse avec d'autres élèves, dont Augusta Leroy, mais aussi **Claudine Leroy** et **Yvette Desomberg**, qui enseignera plus tard l'art de la lice à l'Académie de Tournai, dans une direction novatrice.



Jean LEROY (Péruwelz, 1896 - Tournai, 1939)

The dove of peace, 1940

High stringer - Cotton and wool
Woven by Claudine Leroy in Tournai

Collection TAMAT

Professor of drawing at the Académie des Beaux-Arts from 1931, **Jean Leroy** sought a synthetic, plastic expression of form in his drawings and paintings. Sensitive to monumental art, he tried to breathe new life into tapestry by using a reduced range of tones, hatching colors, simplifying forms, and abandoning perspective and the border around the subject.

Conceived in 1937 and 1938, the two cartoons *La colombe de la paix* and *Tournai, cité royale* illustrate this innovative approach, and were woven by his wife **Augusta Pollet** and daughter **Claudine** during the war. While **Fernande Dubois's** workshop offered classic weaving with great finesse and subtle nuances, in the spirit of «woven painting», **Jean Leroy's** research and experiments opened the way to new perspectives and had a lasting impact on one of his pupils, **Edmond Dubrunfaut**.

THE '40s

The 3 players in the revival



Edmond DUBRUNFAUT (Denain (FR), 1920 - Furnes, 2007)

Cats, 1940-1945

Tapestry - Cotton and wool
Woven by the Robert Taquet workshop in Antoing

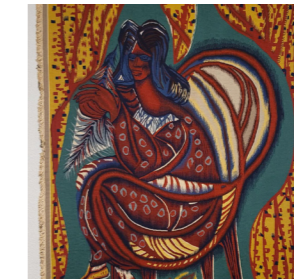
Collection of Wallonia-Brussels Federation - Deposit

During his studies at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Tournai, **Edmond Dubrunfaut** came into contact with the teaching of **Jean Leroy**, with whom he discovered a decisive work at the 1937 Paris World Fair: Picasso's *Guernica*. Interested in the art of lice, he produced his first painted cartoons at this time. At the Ecole Supérieure d'Architecture et des Arts décoratifs de La Cambre in Brussels, he met **Roger Somville** in the monumental painting studio in 1943, and was introduced to **Louis Deltour** at the end of the war.

All three shared a passion for mural art and various media: painting, fresco, ceramics and tapestry. To restore tapestry's expressive value, the young artists experimented with dyeing materials, writing on cardboard and designing numbered tracings, seeking to transpose a project using a simplified technique.

Edmond Dubrunfaut set up two workshops in Tournai - the Claudine Leroy workshop in 1942 and the Robert Taquet workshop in 1945 - to weave his own cardboard

(*Le cerf-volant cassé*, *Les chats*), followed by those of **Roger Somville** (*La femme au chat*) and **Louis Deltour**. In 1945, with his writings *Manifeste pour l'art mural* and *Pour la rénovation de la tapisserie de haute et basse de lisse en Belgique* (*Manifesto for mural art* and *For the renovation of high and low-warp tapestry in Belgium*), he set the decisive milestones for a revival of tapestry and mural art in Tournai and Belgium, of which the Académie des Beaux-Arts became the focal point. Igique, dont l'Académie des Beaux-Arts devient le foyer.



Edmond DUBRUNFAUT (Denain (FR), 1920 - Furnes, 2007)

The blue bird, 1947

Basse lice - Coton et laine
Tissée par l'atelier de la Société coopérative « La Tapisserie de Tournai » à Tournai

Collection of FPS Economie - deposit

Edmond Dubrunfaut's *L'oiseau bleu* (*Blue Bird*) evokes a popular theme, a woman at rest, whose treatment of flowing lines and violently contrasting colors is emblematic of the three artists' aesthetic output at the time. During these years of joint reflection and discussion, a vigorous, expressive, even expressionist style was forged, appropriate to the mural function of the work. Despite this collective spirit, each artist expressed himself according to his own personality and aspirations. **Louis Deltour's** uncompromising social and political commitment is deeply rooted in his aim to create «public art» for the people.

THE '50s

Forces murales - Engaged artists

As early as 1946, the **Centre de Rénovation de la Tapisserie de Tournai** (Tournai Tapestry Renovation Center), which brings together a number of Tournai's leading figures, aims to support and promote artists through conferences and exhibitions in Belgium and abroad. In August 1947, their efforts were rewarded when the Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Paul-Henri Spaak**, commissioned 300 m2 of tapestries to decorate Belgian embassies abroad.

1947 was thus a pivotal year in the adventure of tapestry revival. In November, the artists joined forces to form the **Forces Murales** (1947- 1959) collective, whose objectives they set out in their Manifesto: to break with academic tradition, restore tapestry's authenticity, and translate their humanist ideals and social commitment through works integrated into workplaces, public passageways and monumental architecture.



Forces Murales

The checking of the nets, 1950

Low stringer - Cotton and wool
Woven by the workshop of the Cooperative Society « La Tapisserie de Tournai » in Tournai

Collection of Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Deposit

The following year, the vocational rehabilitation center at the Académie des Beaux-Arts organized a training course for tapestry-makers. The **Société Coopérative «La Tapisserie de Tournai»** (1948-1953) oversaw the execution of the Ministry's commission of 51 tapestries, including *La Vérification des filets*, which bears the initials of the three artists. The tapestry illustrates the reinvented language of wool: limited number of colors, cross-hatching to mark the passage of tones, simplified design, plain background with no perspective, and thick weave, enabling tapestries to be produced faster and at reduced cost.



Paul MINOT (s.d.)

The bird tree, 1941

High stringer - Cotton, wool and silk
Woven by Louise Henneton, of the Tournai Academy of Fine Arts workshop

Collection TAMAT



Edmond DUBRUNFAUT (Denain (FR), 1920 – Furnes, 2007)

The Truth (or The Hanged), from the series Les Martyrs, 1945

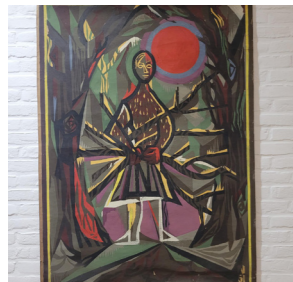
Tapestry template - Paint tempera on paper mounted on 4 chipboard panels

Collection TAMAT

After the war, and in the face of the threat of a new conflict in Asia, artists became involved in the fight against intolerance and totalitarianism. In 1945, the project for a mausoleum dedicated to political prisoners and deportees in Tertre (Hainaut), never realized, gave **Edmond Dubrunfaut** the opportunity to design an ensemble on the theme of Martyrs, combining architecture, murals and tapestries in a total art approach. The three-piece tapestry *Les pendus*, with its powerful, expressionist style of color and form, reinforces this message of horror in the face of war.

The **Forces Murales** artists are committed to the Belgian Communist Party, and through their creations, they defend, with conviction, the people in the conquest of their rights and freedom. To express this message, they insist on the use of realism and figurative iconography, in opposition to contemporary artistic trends, in particular **Roger Somville**, author of numerous writings on this subject.

Influence Forces Murales



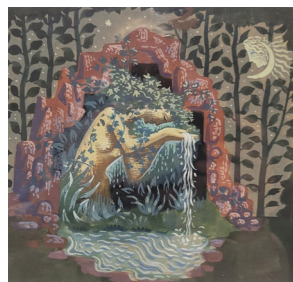
Victor NOËL (Dour, 1916 – Ham-sur-Eure, 2006)

Woman gathering dead wood, 1951

Tapestry template - Gouache

Collection TAMAT

The **Forces Murales** project aroused the interest of several teachers and artists at the Tournai Academy. Between 1947 and 1952, **Victor Noël**, who taught decoration and drawing, notably to **Louis Deltour**, produced a number of figurative cartoons on popular subjects, such as *La fermière* and *Femme ramassant du bois mort*, in a monumental, powerful style featuring expressive contrasts of color and line, before turning to abstraction.



Jean RANSY (Baulers, 1910 – Jumet, 1991)

The source, s.d.

Tapestry template - Painted cardboard

Collection TAMAT

Jean Ransy paints and creates all forms of mural art (tapestries, mosaics, stained glass, frescoes). Influenced by the symbolism of **Jean Delville** and **Constant Montald**, his work oscillates between various currents: symbolism, surrealism and realism. We owe him several tapestry cartoons. *The source* illustrates the imaginary and fantastic universe of the artist, whose work is marked by a highly personal surrealism.



Michel HOLYMAN (Baerl (DE), 1924 – Taintignies, 1966)

Textile activities, the professions, 1955

Low stringer - Cotton and wool
Woven by the workshop of Georges Chadoir in Brussels

Collection of FPS Economie - deposit

A student of **Edmond Dubrunfaut** at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Mons, **Michel Holyman** creates cartoons for tapestries and frescoes in an approach totally dedicated to the wall. Close to the spirit of the **Forces Murales** collective, but less polemical, his work has won numerous awards: at the national tapestry competition of the Ghent Textile Exhibition in 1948, at the UN tapestry competition in 1952, and at the Brussels Universal Exhibition in 1958. Some of his socially relevant creations are linked to economic activity or to popular culture and local folklore. His works are often conceived according to a sequential division of the narrative, animated by scenes with strong graphics, and figures whose particular treatment of faces links the artist's work to the artistic currents of his time.

Michel Holyman has designed several murals for public places, accessible to all. The *L'industrie textile* series - on view in Tournai's Bibliothèque provinciale, near the former Ecole supérieure des Textiles et de Bonneterie where he was a teacher - is devoted to the flourishing economic activity in Tournai at the time. Various processes are evoked in stories and writings: spinning, weaving, dyeing and printing - a technique he practices - and knitting.



Jean LURÇAT (Bruyères (FR), 1892 – Saint-Paul de Vence (FR), 1966)

The emerald salamander, s.d.

Low stringer - Cotton and wool
Woven by the Tabard Frères & Sœurs workshop in Aubusson (FR)

Collection Fondation King Baudouin, Fonds Jacques et Jeanine Versluys-Evrard - Deposit

Between the two world wars, **Jean Lurçat** initiated a movement to renew the art of tapestry weaving in France. After discovering the Angers *Apocalypse* hanging in 1937, he challenged tapestry and its pictorial transcription, then practiced at the Gobelins in Paris and the Beauvais factories. During the war, in Aubusson with master weaver **François Tabard**, he continued his research and developed a new way of weaving. In his 1940 Manifesto, **Lurçat** asserted this new, autonomous tapestry language for decorative and architectural purposes, and in 1947 founded the Association des Peintres Cartonniers de Tapisserie.

Liberté (1943), an emblematic and committed work woven from a poem by Paul Eluard, illustrates his approach to innovative mural and decorative art, conceived according to an adapted technical process: limited number of tones, use of thick thread, hatching of tones, use of numbered tracing paper.

In 1946, the exhibition *La Tapisserie française, des origines à nos jours* in Brussels and the meeting between **Edmond Dubrunfaut** and **Jean Lurçat** encouraged young Belgian artists to pursue their efforts to renew the art of tapestry in Belgium. In 1962, **Jean Lurçat** initiated the Biennale Internationale de la Tapisserie in Lausanne, an exhibition attended by **Roger Somville** and **Edmond Dubrunfaut**.

Exhibition curator: **Béatrice Pennant**, curator at TAMAT.

Tournai, Territoire Textile #3 Visitor's guide

TAMAT is the Musée de la Tapisserie et des Arts Textiles in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Created in 1981, the institution's aim is to promote the art of tapestry, as well as contemporary textile creation, through the annual hosting of artists in its research and experimentation workshop, making it a unique center in Belgium.

Tournai, Territoire Textile demonstrates the roots of tapestry in Tournai: a renowned European weaving center since the mid-15th century, the city was also at the heart of the renewal of tapestry in Belgium in the immediate post-war period. This third edition of the permanent exhibition lifts the veil on the circumstances and players involved in this return to the art of lice between the 1930s and 1950s, which culminated in 1947 with the creation of the Forces Murales collective and the rise of tapestry in Tournai.



Edmond dubrunfaut (Denain (FR), 1920 – Furnes, 2007)

The broken kite, 1945-1946

Tapestry - Cotton and wool
Woven by the Robert Taquet workshop in Antoing

Private collection - Deposit