

ABEGG-STIFTUNG

Media Release, February 2021

SPECIAL EXHIBITION 2021

THE DELIGHTS OF DINING HISTORICAL LINEN DAMASKS

25 APRIL – 7 NOVEMBER 2021

OPEN DAILY FROM 2 P.M. TO 5.30 P.M.



Among the many pleasures of dining, besides indulging the palate, is the spectacle of fine glassware, exquisite porcelain and silver. And since the early sixteenth century, table linen made of white linen damasks has also been a part of any festive banquet. Not seldom it was the most expensive item on the table.

White-in-white patterned table linen? Is there anything to see at all? Most definitely. For concealed within these seemingly plain white cloths are hitherto unimagined visual worlds and experiences. Their subtlety prompts us to ponder our sense of sight and optical phenomena generally, since depending on the fall of light – and unlike on perfectly illuminated photographs – the woven designs are not always clearly visible.

But anyone ready to engage with them will soon discover motifs drawn from seafaring or everyday life, mythological and Biblical scenes, portraits of rulers, historical events and the patrons' coats of arms.

The Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg possesses one of the world's most important collections of historical linen damasks. These monumental tablecloths, napkins and hand towels are normally kept in storage. This year's special exhibition, however, will feature a selection of exceptionally fine examples dating from the sixteenth to eighteenth century. These will be flanked by texts and short films explaining their manufacture, place of origin and use.

Both media release and photo are available as e-mail attachments.

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Caption:

Napkin with a scene of winter sport (detail), the United Provinces of the Netherlands, 1662; Abegg-Stiftung, inv. no. 3846.