

# Gunta Stölzl

1897 - 1983



Gunta Stölzl was a famous textile artist, born in 1897 in Munich in Bavaria, Germany. After graduating from high school, she studied at the School of Applied Arts. She studied glass painting, decorative arts and ceramics.

In 1917, Stölzl's studies were put on hold during the First World War because she volunteered as a nurse until the end of the war. She then returned to Munich and continued studying. She chose to attend the new Bauhaus art school and received a scholarship.

At the Bauhaus school, Stölzl became very interested in weaving. Weaving was not very fashionable at this time. Some of Stölzl's tutors, such as Georg Muche, viewed weaving as 'women's work' and did not think it was very important. Stölzl was passionate about the craft, and began to explore new ways of working, encouraging and mentoring her fellow students. Stölzl quickly became more knowledgeable about the craft of weaving than the people teaching the lessons! After graduating, she moved to Zurich, in Switzerland, where she taught weaving workshops. In 1925 she returned to the Bauhaus in Germany and became the weaving studio's technical director. She was supposed to be working with her former teacher, Georg Muche, but this did not work out well and they rarely worked together.

The new studio had a great range of equipment for weaving, such as a wide variety of looms and excellent dyeing facilities, which was wonderful! However, Stölzl and Muche continued to argue. Muche bought some new equipment that the students were not happy with and they protested. In 1927, he decided

to leave the art school and Stölzl took over. She wanted to make weaving more popular and modern, she did not want it to be seen as solely 'women's work'. She encouraged her students to experiment and explore using new materials. She taught maths as well as weaving techniques. She promoted simple, functional design.

In 1931 Stölzl had to leave Bauhaus. During this time, the Nazi Party was gaining power in Germany. The Nazis did not agree with the ideas and beliefs of the Bauhaus art school. At the time, people could be imprisoned or even killed for disagreeing with the ideas of the Nazis. Lots of the teachers were forced to leave and some of them went to other countries to teach. Eventually the leaders of the art school felt that they had no choice but to shut it completely.

After leaving the Bauhaus, Stölzl returned to Zurich to work with her former students and good friends, Gertrud Preiswerk and Heinrich-Otto Hürlimann. They started a new handweaving business called 'S-P-H- Fabrics'. Unfortunately the business was not a success and closed in 1933. Stölzl then worked on some other projects before setting up a new business in 1935. Together with Heinrich-Otto Hürlimann, she founded 'S & H Fabrics', which was more successful than their first company. She continued to work in handweaving until 1967, and her work was exhibited in famous museums around the world, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1967 she gave up her business and worked on making tapestries. She maintained her passion for textiles.

Stölzl died in 1983 in Zurich, Switzerland.