



Press Kit St. Gallen & Its Textiles

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Brian Atwood



Jean-Paul Gaultier



Fenty x Savage



Ralph Russo



Tommy Hilfiger



Comme des Garçons



Louis Vuitton



Chanel

About St. Gallen

St. Gallen, the capital of the namesake canton, lies in eastern Switzerland between Lake Constance and Mount Säntis, nestled in a verdant Alpine valley. The city is home to the University of St. Gallen, one of the best business schools in Europe. In 2019, the charming and compact traffic-free metropolis counted approximately 160,000 inhabitants.

Colorfully painted oriel windows are a town feature. The St. Gallen Abbey precinct with the cathedral and Abbey Library was classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983. Indeed, St. Gallen's most famous landmark is its Baroque cathedral with the Abbey Library, which houses some 170,000 documents – in part handwritten and over a thousand years old. The library also has Switzerland's most beautiful Rococo hall.

The name and foundation of the town stem from the Irish missionary monk Gallus who founded a hermitage here around 612. From 747, the then St. Gallen monastery was already following Benedictine Rule, which required the contemplative study of books and therefore stipulated the presence of a library. In the Middle Ages, the town developed into an important hub of culture and education in Europe. Later, the St. Gallen embroideries attracted international recognition and brought prosperity to the town.



St. Gallen is a university town with a focus on the economic sciences. The faculty is ranked as one of the best in Europe. It's also home to the renowned "Mummenschanz" theater group (mummenschanz is German for "mummery", or a play involving mime artists), which is celebrating 50 years in 2022—proof that St. Gallen, with its myriad museums and cultural offerings, is equally artistic. In summer, the Three Ponds (Dreilinden-Weiher in German) an open-air bath with romantic art-nouveau edifice and splendid views over the town attracts visitors to swim.

The excellent location in the four-country corner of Switzerland, Germany, Austria and the Principality of Liechtenstein make St. Gallen the best starting point for excursions into the Canton of Appenzell, home to the spectacular Mount Säntis, and to Lake Constance. Whether by rail or bicycle, the cycling and inline skating paradise of Lake Constance can be reached quickly along the Lake Constance Cycle Path. The combination of rail 'n' bike allows captivating tours to be undertaken crossing national borders.

Books, architecture – and a mummy

Built in 719 as a hermitage, the [Abbey of St. Gallen](#) has become one of Europe's major spiritual centers with an imposing, double-towered cathedral. **Its most precious possessions include the oldest German-language dictionary** as well as the Plan of St. Gallen and the oldest surviving architectural drawing from the Middle Ages.

Tourists regularly flock to the Abbey Library, built in 1758 and widely regarded as one of the world's most spectacular historic book repositories. The library is still active and has around 170,000 books in its collection. Other special sights include a 16th-century globe measuring over 10 feet high as well as the Egyptian mummy Shep-en-Isis and her sarcophagus, which the library has owned since 1836.

The library is an architectural marvel. Its magnificent, curved reading room is a Baroque masterpiece with decorative intarsia wood floors, wood-paneled bookshelves flanked by columns, and handsomely stuccoed ceiling murals.



Exhibits on the monastery's history

The vaulted cellar of the Abbey Library is home to a fascinating permanent exhibition dedicated to Gallus, his monastery, and the 1,400-year cultural history of the city. Important originals from the history of the monastery are on permanent display, including the magnificent Evangelium longum with the ivory carvings of Tuotilos (around 895) and the pillars from the Gozbert cathedral (around 830).

Original monastery plan from the 9th century

The famous St. Gallen monastery plan from the 9th century can be seen by the public in its original form. The parchment is the earliest representation of a monastery district from the Middle Ages. It was likely drawn between 819 and 826 in the Reichenau monastery on Lake Constance and is owned by the Abbey Library of St. Gallen. Other treasures from the monastery archives and library to discover include the oldest book of vows from the Carolingian period of the monastery, which contains the vows monks took upon joining the monastery.

For more information about visiting St. Gallen, see <https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-gb/destinations/stgallen/>.

Textile Industry & “St.Gallen Embroidery

A brief history of St. Gallen's world-famous textile trade: In the 15th century, St. Gallen became known for producing quality textiles. In 1714, the zenith was reached with a yearly production of 38,000 pieces of cloth. At the beginning of the 19th century, the first embroidery machines were developed in St. Gallen. Around 1910, its embroidery production was the largest export branch of the Swiss economy. More than 50% of the world's production came from St. Gallen. However, World War I and the Great Depression caused another severe crisis for St. Gallen embroidery. Nowadays, because of competition and the prevalence of computer-operated embroidery machines, only a reduced textile industry has survived. Nevertheless, the *St. Galler Spitzen* (St. Gallen embroideries in English) are still very popular as a raw material for expensive *haute couture*, *prêt-à-porter*, and high-end underwear creations and count among the most famous textiles in the world.

All the renowned fashion designers at one point or another come to St. Gallen for their lace and embroidery creations. Big names such as Chanel, Dior, Armani, Givenchy, Prada, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, AKRIS, Christian Lacroix and Yves Saint Laurent work with St. Gallen based textile companies. Some pieces are manufactured in little workshops in remote areas in the eastern Switzerland towns of the canton St Gallen and the canton Appenzell where the tradition of hand embroidery is now practiced by only a few people. Embroiderers demonstrate hand embroidery to visitors in museums in St. Gallen, but also in smaller surrounding villages of Balgach, Flawil and Stein in Appenzell Auser rhoden, the neighboring canton.



From left to right: Michelle Obama, wearing Isabel Toledo at her husband's presidential inauguration in 2009. Collection from Chanel and Rochas at Paris Fashion Week.

Nowadays, the embroidery industry has somewhat recovered, but it will probably never again reach its former size. Nevertheless, the St. Galler Spitzen is still very popular as a raw material for expensive *haute couture* creations in Paris and count among the most famous textiles in the world. In fact, Michelle Obama wore St. Gallen embroidery at her husband's inauguration ceremony on January 20, 2009.

Today's embroidery companies keep samples of their own products in their archives. They refer back to them for inspiration and to generate new ideas. The textile library constructed in 1886 holds some 38,000 items relating to the most important technical, cultural and historical developments in the textile industry, including over a thousand books featuring samples from embroiderers of the past.

Textile Library and Public Library

The Textile Library collects over 2,000 sample books with textile patterns from Swiss companies. It includes publications on lace and embroidery as well as media on materials, fashion, design and much more. There is also a Public Library inside the Textile Museum.



St. Gallen Textile Museum

Founded in 1878, the *St. Gallen Textilmuseum* (Textile Museum of St. Gallen in English) houses of Switzerland's most important textile collections, featuring woven materials and embroideries from every corner of the globe. This internationally renowned museum collection of about 30,000 objects consists of fabrics from Egyptian grave sites, historical embroideries since the 14th century, hand-made lace from major European centers of excellence, ethnographic textiles, historical fabrics, and costumes, as well as handmade utensils and objects of contemporary textile art. A highly varied event program, museum-related educational activities, as well as an attractive shop round off the museum's offerings.



Its collection of hand- and machine-made embroidery from eastern Switzerland documents the impressive development of St. Gallen's embroidery industry. The museum's library collects media data on all areas to do with textiles and on the related subjects of art and creation.



The library hall which is preserved in historical style is worth a visit, too. Hundreds of sample books, fashion sketches and photographs are kept in the display cabinets and cupboards. For conservational reasons, these objects are not freely accessible. However, an impression of the beauty and variety of the eastern Swiss machine embroidery is conveyed in selected sample books that are laid out for viewing.

St. Gallen textile tours

In this Swiss textile city, visitors can set up some amazing, unique experiences. Travelers can design their own dress or get a first-hand look at the history of textiles in St. Gallen on foot, take a vintage bus or do a tour of the region with their own car. The three-mile [St. Gallen textile trail](#) takes participants to standout buildings that were integral to the textile industry in the heart of the city. Tour-goers learn not only about their history and architecture, but also about how they're used today.



Gallen's Brodenbrunnen and House zum Sternen.

Another way to experience the world of St. Gallen embroidery is to take a special guided tour offered by St. Gallen-Bodensee Tourism. The tour includes an overnight in one of eastern Switzerland's "textile hotels" which feature rooms furnished with selected fabrics, magnificent drapes, and wallpaper from St. Gallen textile houses and design studios.



House Pelikan and House zum Greif along the St. Gallen textile tour.

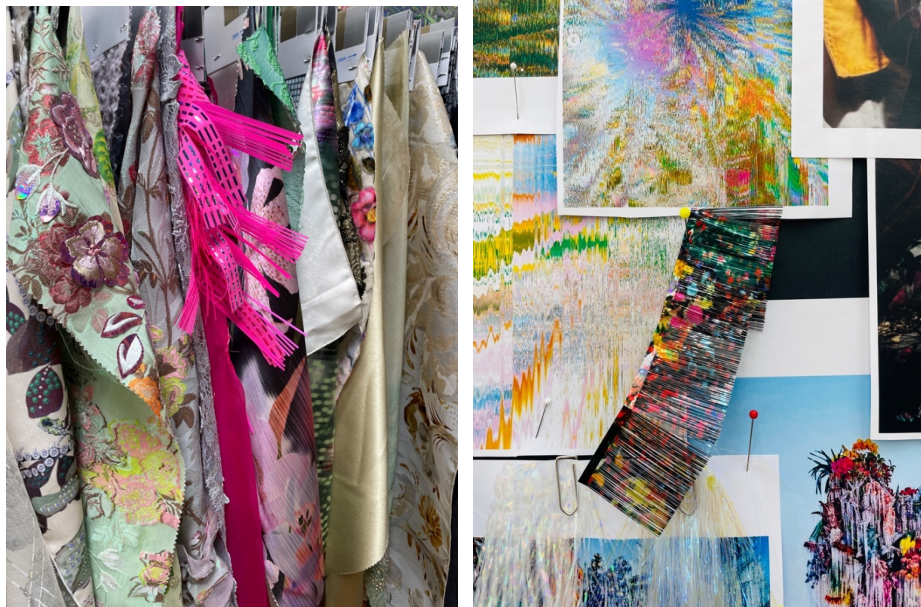
Famous Contemporary Designers & Textile Houses

Jakob Schlaepfer, from fashion to interior design

Textile house [Jakob Schlaepfer](https://jakob-schlaepfer.ch/en/) has been enriching the world with fabrics for more than 100 years, inspiring couturiers, interior decorators, architects and fabric enthusiasts alike.



Jakob Schlaepfer's fashion fabrics, interior fabrics and accessories are diverse and distinctive. The company is not bound to any one style. Instead, it is characterized by the combination of local culture and textile tradition with future-oriented design.



Each collection starts with textile visions for fashion and architecture. The unique combination of meticulous handiwork and industrial production leads to a luxurious product that captivates with its exclusivity and beauty. The design team creates more than 1200 new fabrics every year – always with the aspiration to impress customers worldwide with innovative ideas and high-quality workmanship. The fabrics are conceived, tested and manufactured in St. Gallen. The in-house production and close cooperation with local partner firms enable Jakob Schlaepfer to work experimentally and to respond flexibly to the constant changes in fashion.

Founded in 1904 as an embroidery company, Jakob Schlaepfer has continually adapted technological developments for the company's own purposes. Today, for instance, the firm uses laser cutting, digital printing and state-of-the-art embroidery machines. This has made the fabric processing options more comprehensive and multifaceted.

Learn more at: <https://jakob-schlaepfer.ch/en/>.

Bischoff's bespoke textiles, from traditional embroidery to 3D printing

In the embroidery sector, [Bischoff Textil](#) draws on over 90 years of experience. Its focus is on custom embroidery and technical textiles, among other specialties. The company develops these in line with the individual wishes of their clients. Bischoff is committed to Switzerland as a production location.



The company develops and produce technical textiles and is the exclusive suppliers of the TISSUPOR® Wound Pad 3-D Embroidery wound dressing for Tissupor AG. Bischoff also supports Empa in its research on light-conducting fibers. These are used for so-called wearables, which are technical textiles.

B2B embroidery. Bischoff's ateliers in Diepoldsau, St. Gallen, are equipped with state-of-the-art machinery and highly skilled employees. As a contract embroidery company, Bischoff makes these capacities available to a wide range of external embroidery suppliers. Flexible scheduling and excellent service ensure a high standard of quality.

Special projects. Bischoff's elegant embroidery has been used in many different ways and cooperation outside of the fashion industry such as a collaboration with the Swiss watchmaker HUBLOT.



Museum. The company has its own private museum where archives can be consulted by their clients that include many books and textiles from the early 1900.



Learn more at: <https://www.bischoff-textil.com/en>.

Forster Rohner

When Conrad Forster-Willi founded his embroidery company in 1904 under the name of Forster Willi & Co., embroidery was Switzerland's most important export market. Today, the [Forster Rohner Group](#) is fourth-generation and run by Emanuel Forster and Caroline Forster.

Ready-to-wear

The source and inspiration behind many fashion trends is the street. But the real challenge is finding the material equivalence, that is, creating something new from the visual stimuli. The innumerable folios with thousands of embroidery designs are archived as an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Thankfully, the research and development of new materials is Forster Rohner's specialty. Design proposals in the form of collections bearing the *Forster Willi* and *Forster Rohner* labels are presented in a semiannual seasonal rhythm to individual clients and at the major international fashion exhibitions.



Haute-Couture

Unlimited imagination, extreme savoir-faire and effortless refinement are the basic coordinates of haute couture. It is a matter of fabric that, in its most extreme form of expression is a passionate message full of character and beauty. Technique and materiality blend together tradition and cutting-edge technology. This relationship has flourished between Forster Rohner and the world's best couturiers ever since the end of the 1940s and the cooperation with Christian Dior and Christobal Balenciaga. This has given rise to a major pattern and photo collection, a cross-section of the development of fashion in the second half of the 20th century. A homage to beauty, skill and quality; a source of true novelty.



From left to right: Savage x Fenty fashion show backstage with its founder Rihanna. Threads picking at Forster Rohner.

Lingerie

Forster Rohner is also behind the most high-end and trendy lingerie brands Savage x Fenty, to Agent Provocateur or Chantal Thomass

Inter-Spitzen AG: refined & cutting-edge lingerie

In the tradition of artistic embroidery, [Inter-Spitzen AG](https://www.inter-spitzen.com/en/homepage) has been creating collections for the international lingerie market for over 25 years.

Its embroideries meet the highest standards in terms of both quality and design.



Twice a year, the company presents its diverse and extensive collection at Paris trade shows. Created at its head office in St. Gallen, its designs appeal to customers the world over, including well-known international lingerie, swimwear, and loungewear brands.

Previously renowned for its superb motif collection, Inter-Spitzen AG now offers a wide range of embroideries, covering everything from extravagant customer wishes to lingerie equipped with LEDs.



The company staff oversees the development process, from design to the finished embroidery, meeting the highest standards in terms of quality combining design expertise with cutting-edge embroidery techniques.

Learn more at: <https://www.inter-spitzen.com/en/homepage>

Sustainable fashion*: imitation fur, digital embroidery, & more

Sustainability is a core value of Forster Rohner Group. The company published a [2021 report](#) on its initiatives and how sustainability plays a central role in the company, and it is illustrated through several projects:

- **Ethical “fur”.** Forster Rohner no longer supports fur. Even though fur can be perceived as a symbol of luxury, its production indulges enormous amounts of energy waste and pollution, along with the unethical use of animals. Nonetheless, the company perfectly imitates its appearance and even adds some textile techniques to reach a new level of luxury.
- **Digital catalogue.** Technology also plays a central role, for instance in the optimization of the supply chain, communication, or data exchange. A digital library of their embroideries is now available, to give customers the ability to access samples and get inspiration. The possibility of ordering 3D scans also allows a sustainable prototyping process. Less physical samples are produced, and resources are saved.
- **Digital embroidery.** Technology also brings the possibility to create digital embroidery for Forster Rohner Lingerie. It facilitates the design development process by providing color and print results faster and limits the environmental effects. In short, the carbon footprint, the time spent, and the costs are reduced.
- **Virtual Try-on.** HYPERcurve provides Forster and Rohner Lingerie with digital marketing in 3D. The virtual body-wear collection on DressX allows customers to upload a picture to try on unique lingerie pieces with digitally crafted embroidery. The goal is to reach limitless creativity while being more sustainable.
- **Going Organic.** Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) is the leading textile processing standard for organic fibers across the world. Forster Rohner Group is labeled in Bosnia, China, and Switzerland. The goal for 2022 is to be awarded the Global Recycled Standard (GRS) for the sites in China and Romania, where they most embroideries for lingerie are produced. This label is the most renowned in the lingerie industry.

To learn more visit: <https://www.forsterrohner.com/en/>

*from Forster Rohner Sustainability Report 2021

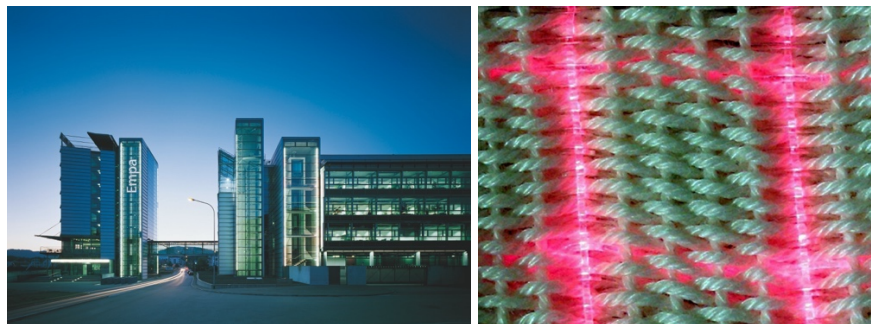
Beyond Cloth: Innovations in textile

The [Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology](https://www.empa.ch/web/empa/home), also known as EMPA (EMPA is the German acronym for *Eidgenössische Materialprüfungs- und Forschungsanstalt*) is an interdisciplinary Swiss research institute for applied materials sciences and technology. For most of the period since its foundation in 1880, it concentrated on classical materials testing. Since the late 1980s, it has developed into a modern research and development institute, nicknamed the Swiss Innovation Institute.

According to its vision – materials and technologies for a sustainable future – EMPA aims to develop solutions for current problems facing the industry and future generations, hoping to move away from today's throwaway society and pave the way for a more circular economy through innovative technologies. Natural resources, including fibers, are finite and should be recycled and reused.

EMPA's research is concentrated in five areas: Nanostructured Materials, Sustainability, Health and Performance, Natural Resources and Pollutants, and Energy. All of its projects have the same goal: to transform the latest findings from research into marketable innovations.

Applied research and development at the institute often unfolds in close collaboration with partners from the textile industry. EMPA embraces a multidisciplinary approach – scientists and engineers from a wide range of disciplines work side by side on most projects. Some of its latest innovations linked to the textile industry include the conversion of textile waste into sustainable and biodegradable solutions.



For example, EMPA's electrospinning and microfluidics systems develop fiber systems from smart polymers. These systems respond to external influences such as temperature, pH value, humidity, or pressure. Today's systems use small, passive capsules that can only release substances by decomposing. What makes self-care materials special is that their innovative fiber systems release substances in a targeted way over a specific period of time when they are "activated". Very small fibers made from smart polymers can be used not only in biomedical textiles and fabrics, but also in packaging films for the food industry.

High-performance fibers that have been exposed to high temperatures usually lose their mechanical properties undetected and, in the worst case, can tear precisely when lives depend on them like, for example, safety ropes used by fire brigades or suspension ropes for heavy loads on construction sites. EMPA researchers have now developed a coating that changes color when exposed to high temperatures through friction or fire.

Smart, skin-friendly fabrics

Bio-based synthetic fibers, spun from textile waste, are seen as a possible addition or alternative to polyester. EMPA is studying the environmental performance of such alternatives, from their life cycles to their interactions with skin. During everyday activities, through a combination of pressure, friction, and sweat, synthetic fibers can be irritating. Skin-friendly textiles and material surfaces are therefore becoming increasingly important, especially in connection with smart fabric sensors and electronic textiles for health monitoring.

To learn more visit: <https://www.empa.ch/web/empa/home>



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