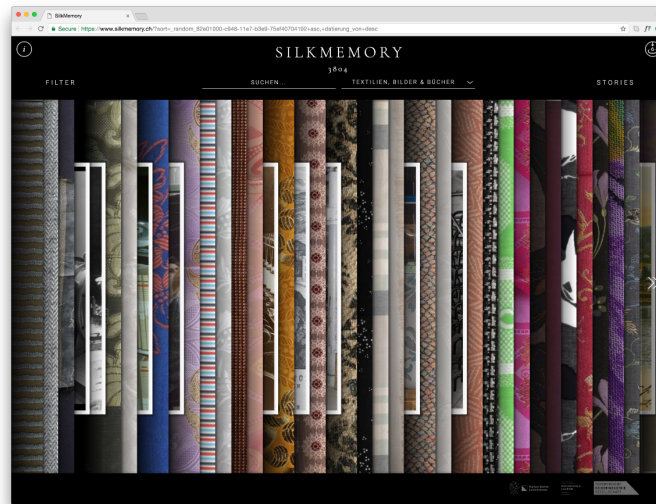


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## Textile design as cultural heritage: the Silk Memory web portal



*Silk Memory web portal, homepage (screenshot, 18 November 2017)*

The Products & Textiles research group of the Lucerne School of Art & Design maintains an interdisciplinary research focus on the compilation, documentation and communication of the history of Zurich's silk industry. Together with Lyons and Krefeld, the region around Zurich was one of the centres of European silk fabric production in the 19th century. The fabrics, which were mainly woven by a cottage industry, employed thousands of people and were exported to all major commercial metropolises. In order to circumvent customs barriers and move closer to their customers, Zurich's silk manufacturers established subsidiaries in Europe and the US. The world economic crisis of the 1930s hit the export-oriented industry with a massive economic slump. From the 1970s onwards, a wave of plant closures began, and today, there is no active silk-weaving industry left in Switzerland.

Whereas the *Silk History since 1800* project is about drawing up a scientifically substantiated book publication about the transnationally interlinked history of Zurich's silk industry, the *Silk Memory* project focuses on tangible textile culture.<sup>1</sup> With the assembly of a physical textile archive for teaching and research purposes, with the establishment of a textile database and with the development of a web portal, the *Silk Memory* project is intended to provide access to selected textile sources of the Zurich silk industry. The sources are based on about a dozen corporate and institutional archives, which within the scope of a lottery fund project are being transferred to public memory institutions, where they will be kept safe and made accessible.

<sup>1</sup> Hochschule Luzern – Design & Kunst, “Silk History since 1800” project, <https://www.hslu.ch/de-ch/hochschule-luzern/forschung/projekte/detail/?pid=124>, last accessed on 11 April 2018; Hochschule Luzern – Design & Kunst, “Silk Memory” project, <https://www.hslu.ch/de-ch/hochschule-luzern/forschung/projekte/detail/?pid=1098>, last accessed on 11 April 2018.

The *Silk Memory* project operates at the interface of archive, research and communication and was deliberately developed in a cooperative network. In close cooperation with museum partners and textile teachers, with contemporary witnesses of the textile industry and practising designers, textile objects from the archives of the Zurich silk industry are selected, digitalised, recorded in accordance with museum standards, catalogued according to a specially developed thesaurus and made accessible online. The *Silk Memory* project is intended to safeguard the textile heritage and result in new value creation. It is aimed at teachers, researchers and anyone in the general public who is interested, and it is intended to serve contemporary design as a research platform and source of inspiration.

The focal point of the *Silk Memory* project is a review of the textile sources from the perspectives of design analysis and design utilisation. Together with experts in communication design, a web-based user surface was developed which places the visually structured object presentation in the centre and provides systematic and intuitive filtering and research options.<sup>2</sup> The textile objects are complemented by selected visual sources from the *Silk Images* image database which furnish insights into the production context from silk culture and design and fabric production processes to marketing and distribution.<sup>3</sup> In November 2016, a first version of the *Silk Memory* web portal was posted online. On the basis of feedback from users and experts, the digital communication facility is constantly being adapted and further developed.

## Brief biographies

### Dr. Monika Burri, Senior Researcher, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Art & Design

Historian focusing on the history of textiles, technology and culture. From 1998 to 2010, a member of the research staff of the Chair of History of Technology at ETH Zurich. Co-editor of book publications about the international nature of railways (2003) and the history of ETH Zurich (2005). Awarded a Doctor's degree for a study of the history of Switzerland's knitting industry (*Bodywear. Geschichte der Trikotkleidung, 1850–2000*. Zurich: Chronos Verlag 2012). Professional experience as an academic archivist and freelance journalist and publicist. Since April 2015, Monika Burri has been working on the archive, research and communication projects about Zurich's silk industry at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Art & Design. For publications and projects, cf.

<https://www.hslu.ch/de-ch/hochschule-luzern/ueber-uns/personensuche/profile/?pid=2934>

### Tina Tomovic, Researcher, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Art & Design

Textile designer with research activities in textile archive and innovation projects. Together with Monika Burri, Tina Tomovic heads the *Silk Memory* archive and research project and is responsible for the eponymous web portal. In addition, she is working on innovation projects, where she is interested in the implementation of textile knowledge in non-textile product areas, as well as in aspects of sustainability. Since 2016, she has organised sustainability education at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Art & Design. For publications and projects, cf.

<https://www.hslu.ch/de-ch/design-kunst/personen/personensuche/person-detail-site/?pid=2379>

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<sup>2</sup> Hochschule Luzern – Design & Kunst, *Silk Memory* web portal, <https://www.silkmemory.ch>, last accessed on 18 April 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Hochschule Luzern – Design & Kunst, *Silk Images* image database, <https://www.hslu.ch/de-ch/hochschule-luzern/forschung/projekte/detail/?pid=2225>, last accessed on 11 July 2018.