



The K.A. Almgren Museum in Sweden's capital opens an unexpected window on the migration of silk from East to West

Nestled on a quiet side street off the fashionable Slussen area of Stockholm is the K. A. Almgren silk mill museum. Discreet and up two staircases, the museum holds the memory of another age, when the building was at the heart of the Almgren's Swedish silk business. In its hey-day in the fin-de-siècle 1890's Almgren's ran 196 looms, with over 200 employees and mills across different parts of the country. The twentieth century has been less kind to traditional silk making, with production going into decline all over the world. In the early 1970's only three employees remained at this once proud Stockholm factory, and it closed in 1974. Today,

after re-opening as a museum in 1991 and an overhaul in 2006, the old mill building houses the only remaining silk looms north of the Alpine mountains.

Walking round the elaborate jacquard looms: concatenations of pulleys, wires, bobbins and spools, all set within or on wood and iron structures, and infinitely thin threads stretching over the machines looms, a particular moment in the rich layers in silk's seemingly eventful history stands before your eyes. The sheer number of threads, the visual complexity of the machinery, mixed with the apparently outdated use of wood and cast iron, adds to how unusual a two