

## Prague Institute

Susan Brandeis and Vita Plume co-taught a fibers studio in Prague for the first time during the summer of 2008 and used the location, as inspiration for the work students would create while in the Czech Republic.

This studio course strongly emphasized observation and response to the city of Prague. Students kept an extensive travel journal/sketchbook and experienced finding supplies and materials in an unfamiliar environment and implementing ideas through small studies and/or finished works.

Brandeis taught surface design, sketchbook and design process skills in digital printing on cloth and embroidery during the first half of the class and divided the Old Towne area of Prague into six pie wedges during the first week. Students were assigned a wedge for their investigation, and they used photos and sketches, to generate collages for inspiration. Plume's half of the class focused on plaiting and tapestry. The studies and structures created were small scale.

Together, Brandeis and Plume led the students, along with Prague Institute Director Dana Bartelt, on a Moravian and South Bohemian bus tour field trip. The area has a long history in lace making, weaving and resist-dyed textiles.

Stops on the trip included the Textiles Museum in Ceska Skalice; The Moravian Gobelin Manufactory in Valasske Mezirici; the Lace Museum in Vamberk, where they saw lace being made; and a weaving mill in Strmilov where one-of-a-kind fabrics are made for clothing and household use.

At the Moravian Gobelin Tapestry Manufactory, the students had a hands-on demonstration in weaving pile carpet and observed the restoration of a 14<sup>th</sup> Century tapestry. This workshop also creates large-scale rugs, theatre curtains and wall tapestries, by artist/owner Jan Stricek.

Prague Institute Director Dana Bartelt praised Brandeis and Plume for their work on the course.

"Each had done extensive research about what was going on in fibers in the Czech Republic before they came to Prague in the summer," Bartelt said. "I was proud to 'show off' these two extremely knowledgeable and talented artists as representatives of the Prague Institute and NC State University to their Czech counterparts."

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