

## FlourWorld Museum

# “THE MAN FROM THE GLACIER”

## How Ötzi came to Wittenburg

A report from Mühlenchemie

**HE IS THE FIRST PERSON KNOWN TO HAVE EATEN CEREALS, AND ALSO THE ONLY LIFE-LIKE REPLICA OF THE “MAN FROM THE GLACIER” IN GERMANY. THE “FLOUR.POWER.LIFE” EXHIBITION TRACES HOW IMPORTANT FLOUR HAS BEEN FOR HUMAN HISTORY, WITH THE FLOURWORLD MUSEUM BECOMING A ‘CEREAL GRAINS KNOWLEDGE FORUM’.**

**Title image (Above):** Angelika Fleckinger, Director of the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology and Volkmar Wywiol, the founder of the FlourWorld Museum in Wittenburg presents the Ötzi in Wittenburg



**T**wo chance finds kickstarted what is now one of the most extensive exhibitions dedicated to the cultural and historical significance of flour.

In June, the extension near to the FlourWorld Museum in Wittenburg near Hamburg opened to the public.

To show aspects of the main idea “Flour.Power.Life”, the new rooms addressed a variety of topics including the earliest history of grain cultivation. At the start of a tour round the extension stands a life-like replica of Ötzi the Iceman, who lived 5,300 years ago. He

represents the first person ever known to have eaten cereals.

The Wittenburg Ötzi is Germany’s only replica of the prehistoric original that created a sensation when first discovered in the Ötztal Alps; he appears in the museum thanks to close cooperation with the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bozen/Bolzano.

It all started in 1998 when Volkmar Wywiol found a flour sack on the beach in Dubai. Wywiol, partner in the firm Mühlenchemie, then began to acquire his unusual collection of flour sacks. The logos used by the millers speak of the traditions, stories and myths surrounding flour. Today this unique collection of over 3,400 exhibits from 137 countries is the centrepiece of the FlourWorld Museum in Wittenburg, which is dedicated to the cultural history of mankind’s most important staple food.

“Cereal Grains Knowledge Forum”

“We regard our collection as a “Hall of Fame” honouring all millers who supply people with their daily flour,” Volkmar Wywiol said at the official ceremony to open the museum extension in Wittenburg. “The opening of these new rooms marks another milestone on the way to a “Cereal Grains Knowledge Forum”, designed to tell experts

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**“FLOUR IS NOT JUST SOMETHING THAT SUSTAINS LIFE, IT SIGNIFIES POWER TOO”**





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and consumers more about the history and significance of grain for our daily bread.”

The new exhibition space has been created on the upper floor of the neoclassical building dating back to 1848. While the ground floor is dedicated to the flour sacks and their various motifs, the upper storey is all about the cultural history of the product flour.

The very title “Flour.Power.Life” (the German original can also be read as “Flour makes life”) is a tribute to the important role that flour, seemingly unremarkable and mundane, has played

in human history: not only does it ensure survival, but is the foundation of every social order bigger than the tribal group.

Flour is not just something that sustains life, it signifies power too.

### Unique replica of Ötzi

An impressive symbol of the earliest history of grain cultivation, the “Man from the Glacier” launches the exhibition with a multimedia welcome to visitors. The mummified body of

the man who was found in the Ötztal Alps has been perfectly preserved and offers a window into the world of 5,300 years ago, the early phase of crop cultivation in Europe.

In fact, two grains of cultivated einkorn were found in the remains of Ötzi's fur coat. Einkorn is generally regarded as the oldest form of cultivated wheat. This replica of what Ötzi looked like is the only one in Germany. It was created in close cooperation with the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, Bozen/Bolzano.

The actual figure of the mummy from the glacier is modelled on CT scans of the skeleton. Animal skin clothing, shoes and copper axe are copies of the original finds.

The new rooms deal with the Neolithic revolution and the role of crop cultivation in the development of early civilizations. Although people had been collecting wild grasses for thousands of years, it was only about 10,000 years ago that they started to deliberately sow seeds.

### Hunter-gatherers become settlers

The preferred type of plants were those that did not shed their



grains as soon as they were touched, but whose grains stayed firmly packed together. Because people selected plants with firm ears, the desired quality became dominant relatively quickly. Such fine adjustments are actually the guiding principle behind crop cultivation.

This transition period is called the Neolithic revolution, because the new crop-planting lifestyle was a radical departure from how the hunter-gatherers of the Palaeolithic period lived. During the



Every new sack with an interesting motif is welcome in the Sackotheque and will find a permanent home there. In the photo you see: Ms Chen Yan and Mr Zhang Zhi Yong from COFCO Grains & Cereals in China

## Cultivating grain permits population growth

In the long term, grain supplies led to expanding populations. And because fields of grain use up far less space than keeping herds of cattle, towns grew up.

The chiefdoms grew bigger, turning into state-like structures populated by tens or hundreds of thousands of people. To keep control of so many people, the rulers (great kings, pharaohs or emperors) relied on a special class of royal administrators, which in turn led to differentiated layers of society. Lists had to be kept documenting the payment of taxes (emergence of scripts). Huge irrigation systems, royal palaces and

Neolithic people gradually stopped roaming in small bands of hunters in pursuit of ice-age big game such as mammoths and elks in favour of permanent settlements.

The fields had to be protected from animals and weeds at all times. Supplies of grain stored in granaries allowed populations to grow over time, despite the risks of failed harvests. Extended families grew into clans, clans into groups of several thousand people led by a chieftain.

cultural sites were created and had to be protected from attack. Trade grew apace, and with it long-distance routes and markets. This was the dawn of the first civilizations.

The first two rooms on the upper floor have been completed. The end result will be a walk through the cultural history of flour, cereals and flour, their role in folk religions, the industrialisation of agriculture and milling, the future of flour, its ingredients, flour improvement, enzymes and flour products from around the world. ☺