

Swiss National Museum.

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MEDIA TEXT (long)

The number of visitors to the various establishments of the Swiss National Museum (SNM) grew significantly once again in 2009 – by 20%. With the conversion of the Museum Group into a new legal form, an important project was successfully completed in 2009.

Visitor numbers

The Swiss National Museum (formerly: Swiss Landesmuseen) recorded a marked rise in visitor numbers in 2009: Compared to the already very successful previous year, the Museum Group attracted 20 per cent more visitors to its institutions. This represents an increase from 235,513 in 2008 to 282,798 in 2009.

While visitor numbers remained mostly at the previous year's level in the museums that are part of the Swiss National Museum – Château de Prangins, Zunfthaus zur Meisen Zurich, Museo doganale Cantine di Gandria – the Forum of Swiss History Schwyz attracted 90 per cent more visitors than in the previous year. The temporary exhibition 'The Swiss Army Knife – a cult object' was a great popular success – more than 13,000 people visited this exhibition. With 20,295 visitors overall, the Swiss National Museum's outpost in Schwyz can celebrate the most successful year since it opened its doors in 1995/96).

The National Museum in Zurich also recorded a gratifying number of visitors. On 1 August 2009, the heart of the museum – the station wing – was reopened with the two new permanent exhibitions 'History of Switzerland' and 'Collections Gallery'. After the somewhat reduced visitor numbers, due to the extensive renovation works in the months before the reopening, the National Museum Zurich has enjoyed a surge in visitors to the new permanent exhibitions and the temporary exhibitions since 1 August 2009. Thanks to this remarkable increase, the average recorded for the year saw a 24 per cent growth of visitors to the National Museum. It means a rise from 124,279 in 2008 to 153,841 in 2009. The number of visitors to Castle of Wildegg in 2009 are worth mentioning in particular. Following the completion of the castle restoration, the new season opened in April with a very well-attended 'open door day'. In total, Castle of Wildegg recorded 50,753 visitors – an increase of 25 per cent over the previous year.

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Since the completion of the restoration works in the station wing of the National Museum in Zurich in summer 2009, the inner courtyard could be used again for various events. As a result, visitor numbers to 'activities outside of the museum' rose for the entire museum group: 246,997 people attended external events in 2009, compared to 71,690 in 2008.

2010 exhibition programme

NATIONAL MUSEUM ZURICH

«**Magic Mountains. Switzerland as energy centre and sanatorium**» at the Zurich National Museum will explore the creation of Switzerland's image as a 'health destination', from Monte Verità in Ascona, via the 'Vital Force' sanatorium opened by Max Bircher-Benner on Zurichberg and the 'Waldsanatorium' in Davos, to the high altitude clinics in Leysin.

«**From Abraham to Zumsteg**» (working title) puts the spotlight on the company Abraham AG, Zurich, which in summer 2007 gifted the Abraham archive to the Swiss National Museum. The richness of the archive, both qualitatively and quantitatively, will form the starting point for a presentation of the world of textiles and fashion of the 2nd half of the 20th century. In addition, the exhibition will focus on the fascinating personality of Gustav Zumsteg, who shaped both the company and cultural life.

«**Furniture and rooms in Switzerland**» (working title) is a dialogical-thematic exhibition from the collection, covering the history of rooms from the 15th century to contemporary pieces of furniture. After the reopening in summer 2009 of the permanent exhibitions in the station wing, 2010 will see the reorganization and labelling of the permanent exhibition of historic rooms in the west wing. A wealth of modern pieces of furniture will add extra interest.

CHÂTEAU DE PRANGINS

«**Promenade of the Enlightenment**» at the French-Swiss base of the Swiss National Museum, the Château de Prangins, will present a cultural exploration in the park. This circuit, consisting of some twenty stations, retraces the history of the place by revealing little known or indeed previously unpublished aspects. Cut-out silhouettes representing famous figures such as Mozart or Voltaire will guide the visitor along this route.

«**Wallpaper**» looks back at the use of this decorative item in interiors in Switzerland and retraces its development, from the first use of paper decoration in the 15th century to the contemporary designs by Olivier Mosset or Francis Baudevin. For the first time, the collections of the Swiss National Museum will be displayed, which house a wealth of wallpapers from the houses and homes of our country, including the Château de Prangins.

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FORUM OF SWISS HISTORY IN SCHWYZ

«**Traditional Swiss costumes on the catwalk**» at the Forum of Swiss History Schwyz will present two exhibitions from its collection in 2010. One will pick out old, traditional crafts as the central theme and explore the extent to which young designers are inspired by the national dress and tradition.

«**Sleds. Sleds**» will show all types of different sleds, including a number of particularly interesting figure-sleds in the form of dragons, stags, dogs, lions or leopards. In central Switzerland, the home of the well-known Swiss bobsledder Martin Annen, which also hosts the spectacular Horämänel-Rennen (a traditional sled race), the subject of sleds is very popular in winter.

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

We intend to continue the tried and tested formula of last year in 2010: The temporary exhibitions will move within the Group: So from July, the National Museum will host the popular exhibition «**The Swiss army knife. A cult object**», and the «**Swiss Press Photo**» exhibition, which was already shown in Zurich, will open in Schwyz.

Expanded collection: Silver plates by Urs Graf back in Switzerland

The Swiss National Museum and the Basel Historical Museum joined forces and successfully purchased some engraved silver plates that are among the most important pieces dating from the Swiss Renaissance. These are four silver plates, approximately palm-sized, with engraved scenes from the life of St. Bernhard of Clairvaux. They bear the signature of the copperplate engraver, draughtsman and goldsmith Urs Graf, who worked in Basel and Solothurn. They were produced in 1519, commissioned by the Cisterian monastery of St. Urban. Each of the parties involved contributed half of the purchase price, with the involvement of the Association of the Historical Museum Basel, the Swiss National Museum, the Canton of Basel City and the Gottfried Keller Foundation. The complete series will be shown in a special exhibition at the Historical Museum Basel until 28 February 2010. From March 2010, two plates will be integrated into the «Collections Gallery» exhibition at the Zurich National Museum.

New Museum Act: The SNM as a public-law institution

With the entry into force of the Federal Museums and Collections Act on 1 January 2010, the Federal government has given the Museum Group a new name, a new legal form and a new structure. The public-law institution is now called 'Swiss National Museum' and consists of three museums – the National Museum in Zurich, the Château de Prangins, the Forum of Swiss History Schwyz – and the collections centre in Affoltern am Albis.

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The Group was restructured to develop a profile of a shared cultural history, as stipulated by the Act. The Musical Automata Museum in Seewen now comes under the control of the Federal Office of Culture, and the Bären-gasse Museum is managed by the City of Zurich. Another consequence of the implementation of the new Museums Act is the transfer of Wildegg Castle to the Canton of Aargau. An agreement was reached between the representatives of the Federal Office of Culture and the authorities of the Canton of Aargau which places Wildegg Castle in an ideal context. It integrates perfectly into the cultural heritage of the Canton of Aargau, which already manages three other castle museums in its area. Wildegg Castle will therefore be handed over to the Canton of Aargau. The transfer of ownership will become effective on 1 January 2011

Museum Council of Swiss National Museum

As from 1 January 2010, the Museums Group is no longer under the control of a Federal Directorate, but rather of a Museum Council selected by the Federal Council, whose seven members were chosen by the Federal Council in autumn 2009. They are responsible for implementing the strategic goals and monitoring the management of the Museum Group. The members are:

Dr. Isabelle Graesslé, Prof. Dr. Irène Herrmann, Mrs. Catherine Labouchère, Dr. Rolf Fehlbaum, Prof. Dr. Iwan Rickenbacher, Mr. Marc Wehrlin. The chair of the Museums Council is state councillor Dr. Markus Notter.

Extension of the National Museum Zurich

After the approval of the application for financing by the federal councils and at the cantonal level, the municipal council considered the matter in the spring of 2009. At the city council, the amount of 10 million Swiss francs applied for from the City of Zurich was approved by 102:13 votes. This includes the surrender of land in Platzspitz-Park and a site-related contribution.

In the discussion, the city council expressed its support for the planned museum extension, which would enable the 'attractive and contemporary operation' of the National Museum. Moreover, it would make a significant contribution to the image of Zurich as a museum location.

The opponents petitioned for a referendum on the submission, so that in June 2010, a municipal referendum will be held about the museum extension.

The planned extension, designed by Christ & Gantenbein, complements the museum buildings constructed by Gustav Gull with a new wing, allowing visitors to follow a circular route through the old and new building. The key feature of the new building is the

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bridge, which creates a spatial and optical relationship between the park and the museum. The competition entry dating from 2002 was reworked after discussions with opponents and experts.

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