

Landesmuseum Zürich.

Zauber Berge

Switzerland as energy centre and sanatorium

26 March – 15 August 2010

Temporary exhibition at the National Museum Zurich

Tour of the exhibition

The historical health trail in the school of applied art wing of the National Museum takes the visitor to the top of the 'magic mountains' in the country's four main regions – to Monte Verità in the Ticino, to the Bircher-Benner clinic in German-speaking Switzerland, to the mountain clinics and sanatoriums of Leysin in the the canton of Vaud and Davos in the Grisons. Alongside the natural healing factors of light, air, altitude, water, herbs, movement and nutrition, the pathways from myth to brand, the tightrope walks between alternative and allopathic medicine, the borderline area between well-being and health obsession, are all explored and presented with surprising exhibits.

Stereo show

A 3D show with historical stereo images introduces the themes of the visit.

Young girl with raised arms

The exhibition then presents the original of the monumental sculpture 'Young girl with raised arms' by Hermann Haller, which still stands on the Landiwiese. The figure, which was created for the national exhibition in 1939, represents the rootedness and naturalness that play a central role both in the 'life reform' movement, as well as in the Swiss sense of identity of the 20th century.

The four magic mountains

The tour then leads the visitor from the monumental sculpture through the Swiss health landscape: from the 'Ticino magic mountain' via the 'Zurich magic mountain' to the 'Grisons magic mountain' near Davos, and from there to the 'Vaud magic mountain', to the open air schools built by the physician Auguste Rollier and immortalised in Hans Erni's 'Landibild', a mural produced for the 1939 national exhibition.

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'Life reform' and natural healing are responses to the urbanisation, industrialisation and secularisation of the 19th century. The 'reform' colony on Monte Verità in Ascona is as much part of the underlying theme of vegetarianism and 'natural' life as the sanatorium 'Lebendige Kraft' ('Vital Force'), opened by Max Bircher-Benner in 1904 on the Zürichberg.

Other objects along the route

The tour then leads visitors past enchanting costumes used in 'Ausdruckstanz' (Expressionist dance), a model of a temple, and the cult picture 'Lichtgebet' (Prayer to light) by the reformed art practitioner Fidus, from the collection of the Fondazione Monte Verità, original Bircher graters and the guest-book of the Zurich raw diet clinic, as well as silver Art Nouveau lobster forks from the Schatzalp sanatorium in Davos, a photo album with pictures of Ghandi's visit to Leysin in 1931, and the skis of the notorious spa guest Hermann Hesse.

The visit continues along the different elements dedicated to health, past an installation accessible to visitors, to the open-air and mountain cures and a water installation that exudes meditative calm, and to a room with spectacular training equipment covering one and a half centuries. Here, the focus of attention is as much on the food industry, with its stereotypes of healthy nutrition such as Ovomaltine or the 'Haus Hiltl', founded in 1898, as on Heidi's longing that can only be assuaged in her Alpine home, and the power training of Werner Kieser. The legendary Swiss spa landscape is showcased with the diorama of a spa hotel in Baden.