

Landesmuseum Zürich.

Swiss homes & furnishings | From the 25. June 2010

A new permanent exhibition at the National Museum Zurich

Tour of the exhibition

The original interiors and furnishings displayed in museums stand as powerful witnesses to past cultures and lifestyles. The «Historic Rooms» that are incorporated in the very fabric of the Swiss National Museum offer a fascinating insight into the look and feel of monasteries, convents, town halls and private dwellings of the 15th to 17th Centuries. Rooms of this kind, which were both heated and kept free of smoke, were known as Stuben in German – a word that has since evolved to apply to living rooms in general. The precise use and appointment of these rooms are a matter of conjecture. What is certain, though, is that the «Historic Rooms» form the heart of the Swiss National Museum (which dates from 1898), and helped its fame spread throughout Switzerland and beyond.

The 20th Century has transformed Swiss life and living to an unprecedented degree. These developments are traced in our exhibition with furniture items typical of the times from the Museum collection. The preference for a furnishing style or the choice of certain items or materials not only reflects residents' tastes; it also reveals their changed lifestyles in response to social upheaval and technological advance. The furnishings thus tell the stories of the times and their societies.

The «historic rooms»

Town Hall, Mellingen | Canton Aargau

Council chamber from Mellingen, 1467. This room was used not merely for political discussion, but also for drinking. The room was made by the master craftsman Hans Wiederkehr.

Fraumünster Convent | Zurich | Helfenstein Room

Cäcilia Helfenstein, a nun of high nobility, had this room built in 1489. The name of the master craftsman is unknown.

Landesmuseum Zürich.

Fraumünster Convent | Zurich | Katharina von Zimmern

Katharina von Zimmern, an abbess at Fraumünster Convent, had this imposing office and residential complex built within the convent's grounds in 1507. The frieze was created by a craftsman from Zurich called Hans Inniger, who used the Flachschnitz (literally 'flat carving') technique.

Fraumünster Convent | Zurich | Katharina von Zimmern

In the late Middle Ages, Fraumünster Convent was home to Katharina von Zimmern, the ruler of the City of Zurich, who received official visitors in this room. The stories depicted in the wall frieze by Hans Inniger were intended to entertain waiting visitors, and show them the righteous path: Those who fear God will find their way to paradise.

Monastery apothecary

Monasteries and convents played an important role in the development of medicinal care. From the 16th century onwards, monasteries established apothecaries that catered not only for the institutions' needs, but also those of the local community. Former apothecary of Muri Monastery in Canton Aargau.

Oetenbach Convent | Zürich

The Dominican Oetenbach Convent moved to the city of Zurich in the 14th century. Women from the nobility joined the order and had apartments built in which they could reside within the convent walls. The carved wall panelling in this room dates from 1521.

Palazzo Pestalozzi-Castelvetro | Chiavenna | Italy

The textile merchant Antonio Pestalozza and his wife Angelica had this magnificent room built on the elegant upper floor of their town mansion in 1585.

Rosenburg, Stans | Canton Nidwalden

In order to affirm his noble status, Johannes Waser commissioned two master craftsmen to lavishly decorate and refit this room between 1602 and 1606, namely

Landesmuseum Zürich.

cabinetmaker Hans Stutz from Vorarlberger and stove-fitter Martin Knüsel from Lucerne.

Wiggen Castle | Rorschcherberg | Canton St. Gallen

In 1582 the St. Gallen canvas trader Jakob II Schlapprizi had this room at his manor panelled and the buffet, bed and ceramic tile stove installed.

Alter Seidenhof | Zurich

Their 17th century textile business brought great prosperity to the Werdmüller family. This stateroom was installed at their residence between 1617 and 1620.

Langer Stadelhof | Zurich

Heinrich Lochmann had this hall at his residence refurbished in 1667. The room, with its portrait gallery and ceiling paintings, served as a ceremonial hall. The wood paneling is characteristic of the Zurich Baroque period.

Furniture of the 20th century | Theme rooms

The tavern today

The 'Seebahn' is a restaurant typical for a working class area of Zurich in the 20th century.

Working in wood

For centuries solid wood has been the most important material for the construction of furniture and interior decor. Industrialization changed not only production methods but also the whole approach to working with wood.

The *Stube* in 2010

This contemporary Stube (living room), complete with wood furniture by Swiss designers and manufacturers, brings together the exhibition themes of 'Stube' and 'Working in wood', and thus brings us up to the present day. Please feel free to use the furniture.

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Furniture in motion

Even back in the Middle Ages, some furnishings were more transportable than others. Wood paneling could simply be removed, chairs folded together, and one's entire belongings packed into trunks. Twentieth – and twenty-first – century comfort requirements demand furniture and furnishings that correspond to a society characterized by a wide variety of living ideas and philosophies. Small apartments and open-plan design call for furnishings that are adaptable.

Diversity of materials

In the 20th century, technical advances and the development of new materials greatly increased the choice of materials available.

Swiss Modernism

In the late 1920s industrially produced furniture started finding its way into private homes. The aim of Modernism was to create functional and contemporary furniture that would be affordable for everyone.

The *Stube* | 1895 | 1927 | 1942 | 1958 | 1970

The *Stube* (living room) of the Middle Ages was a smoke-free heated room for private and public use. Such a room often had a multifunctional character: it could serve as a bedroom, living room, drinking room, reception room or workroom. As a clearer division came to be made between living and working quarters, the *Stube* gradually evolved into a room more specifically for living in, a process that continued into the 19th century. The notion of what 'living' means – and what furnishings it may require – changes according to epoch, social status and self-image. The living room of the 20th century served as both a reception and a family room.

From:

Pocket guide to the 'Swiss Homes and Furnishings' exhibition.

Information regarding the exhibition with details on specific exhibits. 84 pp., in colour and with numerous illustrations, available in German/English or French/Italian. CHF 5.00