



Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel

General press release

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A doll plays in the toy grocery shop, teddy bears race one another in pedal cars, and an entire amusement park is set in motion at the push of a button. With more than 6,000 objects, the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel (Toy Worlds Museum Basel) is unique across the world in its abundance and quality.

The Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel opened in 1998 in a building from 1867 and lies in the very heart of Basel. It is home to a unique collection of historical teddy bears, dolls, grocery shops, dolls' houses and contemporary miniatures exhibited on four floors and more than 1.000 square metres of floor space. Antique collectors' pieces, novelties and exquisite art toys, mainly from the decades around 1900, are arranged into different thematic domains.

The collection

Teddy bears

Boasting more than 2,500 bears, the collection of the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel is one of a kind. A major part of the exhibition is devoted to teddy bears from the workshop of Margarete Steiff: nowhere else can you find so many bears on show with the famous button in their ear. There are also some extremely rare exhibits. "PB Models", which were made by the Steiff company, are more than a hundred years old, and were the first teddies in the world with moveable limbs. Visitors can also delight in the display of other traditional brands, such as the British purveyors to the Crown Chad Valley, the French producer F.A.D.A.P., and the America Gold Label BMC.

Dolls

The copious collection shows artistic creations from the period between 1870 and 1930 from nearly all notable manufacturers. It features dolls from the first major German manufacturers J.D. Kestner, Simon & Halbig, and Armand Marseille, as well as artist-designed character dolls by Kämmer & Reinhardt and the Heubach Brothers. There are also rare objects from France, among them some created by Emile Jumeau and Casimir Bru Jeune.

Doll's houses and grocery shops

Serial production of doll's houses began in the second half of the 19th century. Wealthy families used doll's houses to prepare their children for their future roles in society.



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The collection includes exhibits from the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Exquisite and fascinating rarities from Germany, France, the USA and Japan delight visitors with their originality, beauty and authenticity of detail. The many grocery shops in the collection were made as unique pieces by artist craftsmen between 1880 and 1920. While some of them did their time in the playroom, others were intended exclusively as decorative showpieces. Apart from the fascination evoked by the craftsmanship invested in them and the authentically detailed accoutrements, the shops give us valuable inside views of life and work in their various times.

Carousels

The oldest carousel in the collection was made around 1900. The fairground rides by the artist Frans Smulders and the Autumn Fair by Marc Rippstein – continually enlarged over the years – were made in the second half of the 20th century. All carousels and rides are motorised and can be set in motion at the touch of a button.

Miniatures

Miniatures require exact details and an accuracy of scale. A ratio of 1:12 has become the international standard. For its exhibition, the museum gave specific commissions to artists from various countries to show scenes from around the world.

Animated narrative tour

To mark its 25th anniversary, the museum has brought its doll's houses, bears and grocery shops to life with innovative technology. Animated figures will offer totally new insights into the museum's toy worlds with the help of augmented reality. A teddy bear tells the adventurous story of his development, soup steams in a pot of the doll's house, and there is even a floating Titanic. The unique collection at the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel comes alive. Visitors can use tablets to watch as the museum's exhibits develop a life of their own. Together with virtual figures, they provide new insights into a very wide variety of topics in playful form.

Doll murder at the museum – a crime game

Museum visitors aged 16 or over can solve a mysterious murder in this crime game. Visitors take on the role of detective Agathe Heubach, who is helping her mother search for her lost doll. Neither her mother nor Agathe believe the mounting inconsistencies and begin to investigate. In the process they interrogate numerous bears and dolls.



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Special exhibitions

Every year, several special exhibitions draw visitors in for a cultural exploration. In addition to the annual Christmas exhibition, there is a new exhibition dedicated to the topic of toy worlds every spring, accompanied by various free workshops and events.

Current: "Play is serious", ends on 30 October 2023

Preview: "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas", starts on 4 November 2023

Display windows

The display windows of the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel are rearranged in loving detail several times a year. From underwater worlds to snowy gardens, the display windows are redesigned as the seasons and exhibitions change. But one thing always remains the same: there is at least one mouse hidden in every display window!

Visitor information

Exhibitions, the animated narrative tour and "Doll murder at the museum" are provided in German, English and French. The museum is fully accessible to wheelchairs, from the ground floor to the fourth floor. It is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm from January to November; it is open every day in December. Standard entry for adults is CHF 7.- (16 and over); discounts are available for pensioners and people with disabilities, holders of the Museumspass, and those accompanying persons with disabilities. You can visit the shop without a ticket during the museum's opening hours.

For more information, visit www.swmb.museum.ch

Media contact:

Andrea Häner-Roth
Communications Manager
Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel
Steinenvorstadt 1, CH-4051 Basel
Phone +41 79 550 99 59
haener@swm-basel.ch