

Media release, 9 June 2022

Special exhibition: Elegant Imbibing – Baroque Silver from a Basel Collection

The Historisches Museum Basel is to open its exhibition *Elegant Imbibing – Baroque Silver from a Basel Collection* on 10 June. This will be the first time that one of Switzerland's most important private collections of Baroque silver is unveiled to the public. It promises to provide a fascinating insight into the extraordinary variety of drinking vessels and how they were made and used. For all the many differences, the parallels with how we imbibe today will also be clearly apparent. The exhibition is to run until 29 January 2023.

How can water be turned into wine? Or exotic fragrances conjured for a festive spread? Can imbibing ever be elegant? The 200 silver vessels dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century belonging to this magnificent private collection here in Basel will answer all these questions. Most of the works come from the German-speaking world, many of them from the major goldsmithing centres of Nuremberg and Augsburg, but also from further afield.

Sailing ships filled with wine that "sail" across the table, beakers fitted with windmills and blowpipes that double as party games, "miracle" wine cups, and lidded tankards for up to 2.5 litres of warm beer – they are all vivid and entertaining testimonials to past drinking customs. The artfully designed silver vessels also tell of the functions for which they were made and their importance as status symbols. The elegance of these exquisite Baroque objects, many of them the only known exemplars in Europe, evidently enhanced the pleasure of consuming their contents. The exhibition includes films showing some of these games in action. It will therefore shed light as much on the function of Baroque silverware as on the cultural history of social drinking.

Flanking the exhibition will be a varied programme of tours, talks, and events. There will be a choice of tours, as well as workshops and discussions centred on the design, forms, and use of these precious objects. Another focus will be on the manufacture of these beautifully hand-crafted objects, explained with the aid of a silversmith's workbench. On some Sundays there will be a goldsmith present to explain and demonstrate the various different metalworking techniques.

The tie-in publication, a lavishly illustrated scholarly work published by the Christoph Merian Verlag *Schöner trinken – Barockes Silber aus einer Basler Sammlung*, will present this private Basel collection to the public for the first time and place the works in their larger context. Both exhibition and publication were made possible thanks to the generous support of the collector.

Historisches Museum Basel – Barfüsserkirche
Barfüsserplatz 7, 4051 Basel
Tue – Sun 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

For photos and additional information on the exhibition and publication:
<https://www.hmb.ch/en/service/press-services/>

Further details:

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