

## Exhibition at the Basel Historical Museum – Museum of Domestic Culture **Silver & Gold**

**What makes silver and gold so enduringly fascinating to us humans? How has the work of goldsmiths here in Basel changed since the thirteenth century? The Historical Museum's new exhibition presented against the splendid backdrop of the Museum of Domestic Culture enables visitors to experience the beguiling glint of gold for themselves from 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015 to 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2016. With over 200 exhibits from its own collection, the craft guilds and around 100 loans, most of them privately owned, the show unfurls seven centuries of goldsmithing in Basel. Some of the works are on view to the public for the first time ever.**

### **The culmination of years of research**

For many centuries Basel was a major centre of excellence in goldsmithing famed far beyond the region itself. Around a thousand goldsmiths have made Basel their home since the thirteenth century and their works have become an important part of the city's heritage. Thanks to the generous support of private benefactors, the Basel Historical Museum was able to devote several years to the study of this particular chapter of civic history in a research project whose findings fill two major catalogues. Authored by Ulrich Barth and Christian Hörack and published in 2013 and 2014, these provide a detailed account of the lives and times of Basel's goldsmiths flanked by a representative selection of their works. They also supplied the scholarly underpinning for the dazzling display of plate currently on show in the Museum of Domestic Culture.

### **Travelling back in time with silver gilt made in Basel**

The exhibition takes visitors on a journey back in time to the medieval monstrosities, reliquaries and liturgical plate made for ecclesiastical patrons before and after the Reformation, to the extravagant cups and showpieces commissioned by the city's craft guilds, societies and clubs, and finally to the silverware and opulent table ornaments made for use in private households. That the dining culture of the 17th and 18th centuries is a special focus of the show has to do with the venue. For what better place could there be to showcase fine tableware than in one of Basel's grandest private mansions, the Haus zum Kirschgarten? Visitors can follow the development of drinking vessels from plain beakers to the ingenious clockwork *Trinkspiele* of the Baroque period, one of which miraculously turned water into wine. They can also marvel at the imagination and inventiveness evidenced by the plethora of pots designed specially for coffee, tea and hot chocolate, three luxury beverages that became widespread only in the 18th century. Finally, a selection of works by contemporary goldsmiths and an insight into the technical aspects of goldsmithing past and present brings them full circle.

### **A magnificent installation in a textile manufacturer's home**

With a scenography developed by Adeline Rispal of Paris that takes full advantage of the varied interiors of the Haus zum Kirschgarten, the exhibition promises to give visitors an unforgettable experience of silver and gold. An installation called *Reflections* designed by students at Geneva

University of Art and Design, moreover, explores the play of reflections that makes shiny objects so beguiling.

Presented in German, French and English, Silver & Gold is sure to delight all those from Switzerland and beyond who appreciate exclusive, finely crafted luxury objects and who are interested in the dining culture of which they were a part.

### **Programme of events**

The programme of events includes live demonstrations of various goldsmithing techniques at a special workbench inside the museum as well as a chance to watch some of today's goldsmiths at work in their own studios. Several interactive events have been created to give students at vocational schools and technical colleges an insight into what a career in goldsmithing might entail. Meanwhile, for those more interested in what goes on the plate, there will be lessons in fine dining and table manners for both children and adults alike, as well as exclusive dinners, bookable through the museum, at which visitors can dine in style against the glorious backdrop of the Haus zum Kirschgarten.

The exhibition is supported by:

Stiftung für das Historische Museum Basel

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E. E. Zunft zu Hausgenossen

**Exhibition venue:** HMB – Museum für Wohnkultur / Elisabethenstrasse 27/29 / Basel

**From** November 27, 2015 to April 3, 2016

**Opening hours:** Tuesday to Saturday 12 noon–7 pm, Sunday 10 am–5 pm; Mondays closed

Closed on 24.12., 25.12., 31.12.2015, 1.1., 15.2., 16.2., 17.2., 25.3.2016

Open on 27.3 and 28.3. from 10 am–5 pm

**Admission:** CHF 18.- / reduced rate: CHF 5.-

### **Further information:**

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Exhibition photos are available for downloading at the HMB Flickr site:

<http://hmb.ch/de/sonderausstellungen/silber-und-gold/presseunterlagen>