

Solothurn's magical number 11

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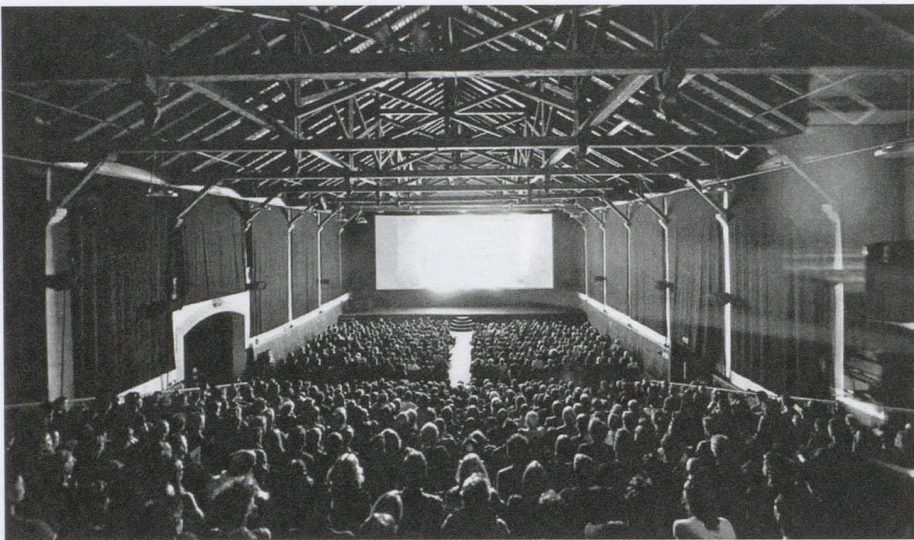
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Solothurn for the Creative and Art Aficionados



I'm sure most of you are familiar with the Film Festival Locarno. Every year in August, the festival draws thousands of Swiss and international guests to the Piazza Grande where one of the largest open-air screens in the world shows anything from low-cost to blockbuster movies. Besides a fantastic selection of films, visitors might also get a glimpse of Hollywood stars like Quentin Tarantino or Penelope Cruz who are invited as guests.

I do wonder, however, how many of you have heard of the Film Festival in Solothurn? Well, I hadn't. Had I known, I could have looked forward to another major film event in Switzerland: one occurring in winter.

The Solothurn Film Festival does without the Hollywood glamour and specializes on airing Swiss film productions only. In 1966, the local film guild got together and decided that it was time to offer a platform for young, independent Swiss filmmakers who want to make their work public. This year (2015), the 'Schweizerische Gesellschaft Solothurner Filmtage' (the organisation) looked back on 50 years of successfully doing exactly that. The Solothurn Film Festival has in fact become the most important film festival for Swiss film productions. It is attractive for Swiss filmmakers not only because it gives them the chance to show their creations to 60,000 guests per year but it is also very appealing to their wallet: the 'Prix de Soleure' honours films with a humanistic message with an award of CHF 60,000; the 'Prix du Public' beckons with CHF 20,000 and there are another 3 awards to be won, each with a prize of 10,000 Swiss Francs.

Of course the audience does not miss out on anything either. The festival offers

films of every genre (feature films, documentaries and short films) and even pays tribute to music clips. There are furthermore a series of public talks and panel sessions to be enjoyed where John Doe (or rather Heinz und Kunz) can meet members of the film industry. Art lovers can also attend film-related workshops and parents can leave their offspring to watch special screenings for children. Even the romantics get their share: one of the locations of the screenings is the 'Landhaus' which beautifully overlooks the river 'Aare'.

For those of you who just so happen to be in Switzerland in the near future: the festival takes place in January and lasts for 8 days. And if on top of that you happen to make films yourself: you can now apply with your own Swiss film until September 2015!

Oh, and if you are unable to attend the Solothurn Film Festival in January 2016, you still have the chance to enjoy another fantastic arts event in the city: the Solothurn Literature Days. From 1979, the Literature Days have been a meeting place for the public with Swiss authors, editors, the media and other professional. Every year on the Ascension Day weekend (for 3 days), the public can enjoy readings from Swiss authors of all four linguistic regions (and some international authors), as well as visit exhibitions and attend podium discussions and film screenings.

Now these multilingual cultural events will certainly become part of my itinerary when I visit Switzerland next. What about you?

By Luzia Sauer

Sources: <http://www.solothurnerfilmtage.ch>
<http://www.literatur.ch>

Solothurn's Magical Number 11

In Solothurn, everything goes by the number 11 or multiples of the number 11, often called the "holy" number.

The cathedral of St Ursus and Viktor was built in 11 years (1762-1773) and has 11 altars and pews in groups of 11. The façade is 33 m high and the tower 66 m, while the main staircase to church (see page 4) is divided into flights of 11 steps. The cathedral has 11 bells.

Solothurn has 11 museums, 11 fountains, 11 chapels, 11 churches and a clock that only has 11 numbers. The old town also once had 11 towers, 11 gates, 11 bastions, 11 squares, 11 chaplains and 11 guilds. There's even a beer called "Öufi" (local dialect for 11).

Why the number 11? There is plenty of speculation about this. Some say it's because Solothurn was the 11th canton to join the Swiss Confederation. But a much more likely explanation is related to Solothurn's Saints of St Ursus and Victor. Some say they were part of the 11th Theban Legion. It's also noted that the legion comprised 6666 men. Further, legend has it that 66 soldiers, including Ursus and Victor, were martyred on the bridge in Solothurn.

Whatever the reason, the number 11 is profoundly embedded in Solothurn's culture and tradition, so much so that it listed as one of the National Swiss Living Traditions.

By Susie Wood

www.lebendige-traditionen.ch

