

# Cultural over the new year

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# CULTURE OVER THE NEW YEAR

A number of cultural events abroad have been staged last year with the participation of the Pro Helvetia Foundation. This institution is similar to the British Council or the Alliance Française, and is the main official body responsible for promoting Swiss culture abroad. Its latest press release mentions, among other events, a tour of Japan by three *viol* players from the *Schola Cantorum Basiliensis*. The *viol* is a six-stringed medieval instrument that came before the violin. The three instrumentalists from the Basle specialised ensemble played works from Conrad Beck, Joseph Haselbach and J. F. Zbinden with Japanese harpsichordists and orchestras. In this particular instance, the efforts of the Pro Helvetia Foundation were obviously not aimed for a mass public. Of a perhaps more common level of culture, a *Ferdinand Hodler* Exhibition was held in the University Art Museum of Berkeley. The same collection of works, by one of the world's most resplendent painters of mountains, was then moved to the world-famous Guggenheim museum in New York.

## SWISS CULTURE ABROAD FOR RESTRICTED ELITE

Copenhagen's Thorvaldsens Museum staged over Christmas an exhibition purporting to show the cross-influence and relationship between Swiss and Danish art between 1750 and 1850. Of the artists exhibited to illustrate the blending of Nordic and Swiss inspiration were Aberli, Gaspar Wolf and Liotard.

An exhibition of *Swiss Graphic Arts* which was shown at the end of last year in London with great success was being shown during January in Hamburg and was to move to other important centres of West Germany. Two West German publishers brought out works related to Swiss Art under Pro Helvetia auspices. The firm of Dumont Schauenberg, Cologne, produced a complete and illus-

trated book on the Swiss painter Lois Moillet, who had considerable influence on the life and style of Paul Klee. The Berlin publishing firm of Propyläen brought out a book on Benjamin Constant (1767-1830), a writer born in Lausanne and naturalised French. He played a leading role in Liberal opposition to Napoleon and belonged to the "court" attracted to Coppet, near Geneva, by Mme Germaine de Stael, an influential Franco-Swiss literary figure.

## A FLURRY OF CULTURAL EVENTS

A series of conferences and films were shown before Christmas at San Antonio University (Texas) on the theme "Switzerland and Jung". Films by Tanner were screened and conferences were delivered by Swiss sociologists and psychiatrists. One of them was Professor Manfred Bleuler, former director of the Burghölzli Hospital in Zurich, where Karl Justav Jung first practised psychiatry (and realised the futility of the treatment hitherto dispensed to the hospital's patients).

Many exhibitions were staged in all the main Swiss cities at the turn of the year. Many of these exhibitions were of regional character and served to highlight local artistic production. Such exhibitions tend to attract at least as many, if not more people, than international art exhibitions. Special Christmas exhibitions were staged at Arau, Basle, Bern, Chur, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne, Winterthur and Zurich.

One such exhibition was devoted to the work of the American artist *Walter de Maria* at the Kunsthaus in Basle. This artist is known for his experiments, stemming from an eminently mystical temperament of "land-art" and "minimal art". Perhaps even more exclusive was the exhibition staged from the beginning of February in the Kunsthaus in Zurich of the works of another American: *Ad Reinhardt*, a painter who uses black as his only colour and says of his art that it is "non representative, non figurative, non expressive and non subjective". Earlier, the Kunsthaus had presented an exhibition on the art of caricature in all its historical, political and artistic aspects. The works of the expressionist artist Kurt Wiemken and Annemarie von Matta, a romantic recluse born in Stans, were exhibited respectively in Basle and Lucerne over Christmas. Two hundred etchings and engravings by Picasso were exhibited in Berne's Kunsthaus. These items came from the George Bloch collection. They have been bequeathed to the Gottfried Keller Foundation, which plans to present them to various art museums across Switzerland. A similar Picasso exhibition was held at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Neuchâtel.

## EXHIBITION COMMEMORATING JOYCE IN ZURICH

The Musée Rath in Geneva devoted an exhibition to Venice, with Antonio Canaletto and Francesco Guardi as its leading exponents. Lausanne's museum of decorative arts organised an exhibition of children's picture books across the world and history. The Central Library in Zurich presented its public with an exhibition on "Joyce and Zurich". The author of "Finnegans Wake" resided in Zurich from the summer of 1915 to the autumn of 1919 and lived off English lessons at Berlitz. He visited the city on several occasions between 1919 and the outbreak of the war, when friends offered him shelter in Zurich. He died there in January 1940 and was buried at the Fluntern cemetery. His major work, "Ulysses", bears many marks of his four-year stay in Zurich. The exhibitions that was staged last December assembled many photographs, documents, letters and articles relating to James Joyce's life in the Limmat Capital.

## SIX-HOUR PROMENADE CONCERT

Another interesting exhibition held at the end of the year - at Fribourg - presented a comprehensive picture of the important archeological finds that have been made during works on regulating the flow of waters flowing in and at the feet of the Jura mountains. These works involved important excavations on the river Thielle and the river Broye which brought to light the remains of a number of Neolithic, Celtic, Roman and Medieval settlements, foundations, footbridges and bronze objects. The correction of the Jura waters had been an endeavour of considerable magnitude undertaken by five Cantons (Neuchâtel, Fribourg, Berne, Solothurn and Vaud), with the help of the Confederation.

The *Pro-Helvetia* news-sheet also gives an account of various musical events in Switzerland and abroad. At one of them, organised in Graz by the "International Society for Contemporary Music", saw a performance of Heinz Holliger's "Kreis für vier bis sieben Spieler" - a decidedly original piece in which performers every now and then stop to play and swap their instrument - so that the violinist is made to play the trumpet. The Jacques-Dalcroze Institute in Geneva opened a new musical library while the Trombone Quintette of Cologne's Musical Academy played a three-concert series of ultra-modern music at the Kunsthaus in the midst of valuable works of art belonging to the Museum. The artists invited their audience to a discussion after the performance. Finally, the promenade-concert idea is picking up in Switzerland - with a special brand of Swiss thoroughness: A series of "proms" held in an art school in Berne lasted six hours each, with a snack included in the bargain.

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