



Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel

Media release for the Special Exhibition

Play is serious

18 March – 30 October 2023

The Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel (Toy Worlds Museum Basle) celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. To mark the occasion, doll's houses, bears and grocery shops will come to life thanks to modern technology. Animated figures will offer totally new insights into the museum's toy worlds with augmented reality.

The anniversary exhibition, which opens on 18 March with a preview for young and old, will be entirely devoted to play: children have always played and will always play – for no less than 15 000 hours on average until we reach our sixth birthday. And that's a good thing: in play, we learn many skills that we need in order to lead an independent life later on. So play is about more than just having fun. Play is serious!

Animated narrated tour: stories from the world of toys

A teddy bear tells the adventurous story of his development, soup steams in a pot of the doll's house and even the Titanic sails by. The unique collection at the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel (Toy Worlds Museum Basle) comes alive. Visitors can use tablets to watch the museum's exhibits developing a life of their own. Together with virtual figures, they provide new insights into a very wide variety of topics in playful form.

The additional children's track makes zeppelins fly through the room, tennis balls bounce through the air and notes dance out of the gramophone towards you.

We asked the experts: five positions on the importance of playing

Play is one of the most important drivers in human development. Experts explore the history of play and its importance for our development in five videos. See the appendix for more info about the interviews.

Bowling alley

An extensive bowling alley is installed around the interview stations: visitors young and old can make bells ring with the balls, overcome small hurdles – and in doing so become part of the exhibition themselves.

Programme

The highlight is the big party to mark the 25th anniversary of the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel (Toy Worlds Museum Basle) on 27 August 2023. In addition to a variety of games, a wealth of crafting opportunities and a photo box, a competition will be held: any visitor wearing a fancy dress costume appropriate to the museum can take part. There will be prizes for the 25 most imaginative costumes.

The exhibition and AR tour are trilingual:

English, French, German

More information about the interviews

Experiencing the world by play: five positions on the importance of playing

Play is one of the most important drivers in child development: in playing, we acquire social, cognitive and manual skills that are essential for us to lead an independent life. Play is thus a training ground for real life. So it comes as no surprise when archaeological, historical and cultural anthropological studies show that children have played and still play in every era and in every culture. Experts explore the history of play and its importance for our development in five interviews.

Children's games in ancient Rome

Toys from every epoch are found in archaeological excavations – for example, yo-yos, dolls and animal figures made of clay from the Roman period. However, the number of toys found is small compared to that of everyday objects. A better impression can be gained from pictorial and written sources, which tell of a rich play culture.

Some information from archaeologist Andrea Hagendorn, Head of Outreach with the Archaeological Service of Canton Basel

Since when have human beings played?

Play is a basic anthropological need. Children have always played and will always play. The simplest things can become toys. The biggest difference between playing in earlier times and now is: the location. Children used to play mainly outside – the nursery or children's room is a phenomenon of industrialisation.

Interview with historian Frank Meier, expert in mediaeval and early modern history and the didactics of history at the Karlsruhe University of Education.

Why do we play?

Playing brings people together: games are a way of rehearsing things that are taken for granted in a culture's community life. They enable children to acquire an understanding of the world's mechanisms. In playing, people can venture to do new things, try out solutions and develop ideas.

Interview with cultural anthropologist Anne Dippel, a research associate in the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Cultural History at the University of Jena.

Toys and gender roles

Are girls just more empathetic than boys, and is that why they play more often with animals and dolls? There is no conclusive proof to date as to whether preferences in toys are rooted in genetics. One thing is clear, however: given the opportunity, boys also like to take their teddy to bed. As empathy is a matter of practice, such toys need to be available for all children.

Interview with gender researcher and author Stevie Schmiedel. She is one of the founders of the educational organisation "Pinkstinks Germany" and advocates diverse gender roles for children and young people.

Play as an end in itself

Playing means testing out reality in an enjoyable way. Even in early childhood, it has a very important role in the acquisition of motor, cognitive and social skills. In play, children can immerse themselves in a parallel world where they make their own rules. Adults don't have to see a purpose in it. As long as the children are having fun, adults should not intervene.

Some information from Moritz Daum, Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Zurich, who specialises in social-cognitive development in infancy and childhood.

Programme

Opening 18.3.23, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Childrens' opening

A giant bowling alley will be set up in front of the museum for our small guests.

Drinks can be mixed at the bar and the approach of spring is an invitation to the first soft ice cream of the year!

Birthday Party 27.8.23, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

25 years of the Spielzeug Welten Museum (Toy Worlds Museum) – 25 winners

Who comes to the party in a fancy dress can take part in a competition. The theme: your favourite motif from the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel (Toy Worlds Museum Basle). The 25 best outfits will win a prize!

Plus: Fotobox, frozen yoghurt bar, birthday cake, tattoos and much more. We look forward to a fantastic party with you!

Holiday Ferienpass 13 July and 2 August, 9:00 am – 12 noon

"All-round" thrills with our bowling alley in the exhibition.

For children aged 7–12.

In collaboration with Junioratelier Basel

Register at www.basler-ferienpass.ch

A Night at the Museum, 28.10, 6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Explore the museum by the light of your pocket torch!

Weekend craft workshops – make your own "froggy" cup-and-ball toys

25./26.3.

10./11.6.

23./24.9.

15./16.4.

24./25.6.

14./15.10.

29./30.4.

12./13.8.

13./14.5.

09./10.9.

From 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm

Games afternoons

Sun 2.4. / Sun 21.5. / Sun 4.6. / Sun 22.10. – from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Relax with your friends in the museum and spend a fun games afternoon with us: you can look forward to lots of (analogue) games!

Admission

CHF 7.–/5.–, no extra charge for the special exhibition.

Admission free for children up to 16 years of age. Under-12s must be accompanied by an adult.

Opening hours (incl. shop and restaurant)

January to November: Tuesday to Sunday 10:00 am – 6:00 pm

For special opening hours see www.swmb.museum

For more information about the exhibition

Sibille Arnold, curator and general manager of the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel (Toy Worlds Museum Basle): arnold@swm-basel.ch

About the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel

A doll plays in the toy grocery shop, teddy bears race one another in pedal cars, an entire amusement park is set into 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. Accommodated in a building from 1867, it lies in the heart of Basel. Its cheery, lovingly arranged display windows have meanwhile become famous far and wide: they attract visitors of all ages and are an invitation to discover a world full of wonders.

Special temporary exhibitions on a wide variety of topics beckon visitors on a foray into new cultural realms, shining a spotlight on the unknown and placing the exhibits in a – sometimes surprising – historical context.

High-resolution images from 15 March at: www.swmb.museum

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