

## Press release

### Christmas & Cribs

19/11/2020 – 10/1/2021

**The Christmas exhibition has been part of the National Museum's regular programme for many years now. This winter, we're focusing on nativity scenes from Switzerland.**

Nativity figurines have been used in Switzerland since the 17th century to celebrate the birth of Jesus. A whole host of materials have been used for this, from wax to fabric to clay. In the 17th and 18th centuries, these figures were mainly found in wealthy families, as they were made individually by hand and were therefore expensive. It wasn't until nativity scenes made from paper started being produced in greater volumes towards the end of the 19th century that their use became more widespread, as the paper objects were cheaper. These paper nativity scenes were very popular, and were easy to assemble and take down. As a result, they were later also colloquially referred to as 'lazy man's nativity scenes'.

This year's Christmas exhibition will display around 25 nativity scenes from throughout Switzerland. One of the highlights, following on from last year's exhibition on nuns, is objects from convents. The nativity scenes are complemented by a display of historical advent calendars. These calendars were often designed by well-known children's book illustrators. The selection ranges from the earliest example, devised by Gerhard Lang and Ernst Kepler at the beginning of the 20th century and featuring simple, childlike pictures, to the first calendar filled with small gifts, designed by Dora Baum, and modern-day examples.

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive supporting programme for families. At the Museum children can read books, listen to the Christmas story, make their own gifts, or wander through the exhibition spaces with a lantern.

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