



ABEGG-STIFTUNG

Press Release
Riggisberg, September 2011

Abegg-Stiftung Reopens with a New Permanent Exhibition

18 September – 13 November 2011
Open daily from 2 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Following a comprehensive modernization of its exhibition premises, the Abegg-Stiftung reopens with a new permanent exhibition. The modern, open-plan interior with its discreet colour scheme provides an elegant, but fully functional backdrop for the presentation of works of art. The new permanent exhibition treats visitors to a magnificent display of textile treasures from all over Eurasia.

During a construction period lasting over two years, part of the old exhibition premises was replaced by a new, slightly larger extension. This building, which has a proper basement and whose upper storey is set back, provides not only extra exhibition space, but additional workspace and storage areas as well. The project costs came to about 25 million Swiss francs.

FLUID SPACES

The new exhibition area has neither supporting pillars nor walled-off rooms. The ceiling spans an area of more than 1,500 m². This space is partitioned into individual display areas by movable wall elements that act as monumental partitions or hide the supporting outer walls. Arranged at various angles, the elements form a sequence of smoothly connected display areas that narrow and expand as required. The spatial concept originated in the designs of Hanspeter Wespi, OTIA architect from Gordola, whose MITRA proposal won the open competition to find the best design. The project was then substantially developed and realized by Erich Offermann and his firm oap in Zurich.

INNOVATIVE LIGHTING

Both the hall in its entirety and the individual exhibits are illuminated by LEDs (light-emitting diodes) – a technology never used before on such a scale for a museum. The wall-to-wall light canopy with its thousands of miniscule lamps – filtered through matte glass – bathes the exhibition area in a wonderfully soft light. The result is an interior that seems brightly lit without too much light falling on the sensitive textiles. Single spotlights are used to highlight individual exhibits and throw them into relief. The colour of the light is infinitely variable and masks are used to adjust each light cone to the exact shape of the individual exhibit.

SUBTLE ELEGANCE

The interior design of the building was devised with the optimum presentation of works of art in mind. Discreet colours, refined materials and meticulous craftsmanship all contribute to the overall impression of elegance, as do other, less obvious features, such as the panels of frosted glass in the light canopy, whose size and shape match the square pattern of the parquet flooring. The wall elements appear light and discreet by being raised up off the floor and ending just below the ceiling, while the harmonious pattern of their joints continues into the distance. The suspension of the light canopy in three distinct tiers also allows the room to expand by stages. The interior is both light and airy, while the visitor's gaze is automatically directed to what is most important, that is the fascinating exhibits.

LOOKING AHEAD AND ACROSS

The new permanent exhibition presents the highlights of the Abegg-Stiftung's world-class collection, giving centre stage to the sumptuous fabrics from Europe, the eastern Mediterranean and regions along the Silk Road. These are arranged according to geographical and chronological criteria, with the wall elements positioned in a way that allows mutually influential cultural spheres to be viewed simultaneously. Indeed, it is part of the concept that the exhibition looks both ahead and across: from the early to the late Middle Ages in Europe, for example, or from the textiles of the Mediterranean region to the robes of Central Asia. Cross-references through space and time are thus visualised. The time span covered by the exhibits extends from the fourth century BC into the eighteenth century AD. Paintings, sculptures and finely crafted works of art are also exhibited to shed light on the interrelationship between textile and other arts.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

The permanent exhibition has not only been given a modern and homogeneous look; it has also grown in size, so that far more textiles are now on display than previously. Around thirty fabrics and robes are on show for the first time. Most of these are new acquisitions from the last ten years. They include several items from Central Asia and China, but the collection of Byzantine and European textiles has also been considerably augmented.

FUTURE SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

The new permanent exhibition leads into the 200 m² space reserved for special exhibitions. Starting in the spring of 2012, this is where the Abegg-Stiftung will henceforth stage its annual temporary exhibition, thus affording visitors an opportunity to discover still more aspects, eras and techniques of textile art.

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