

# Chaplin Museum opens in Switzerland

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **82 (2016)**

Heft [5]

PDF erstellt am: **30.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-944310>

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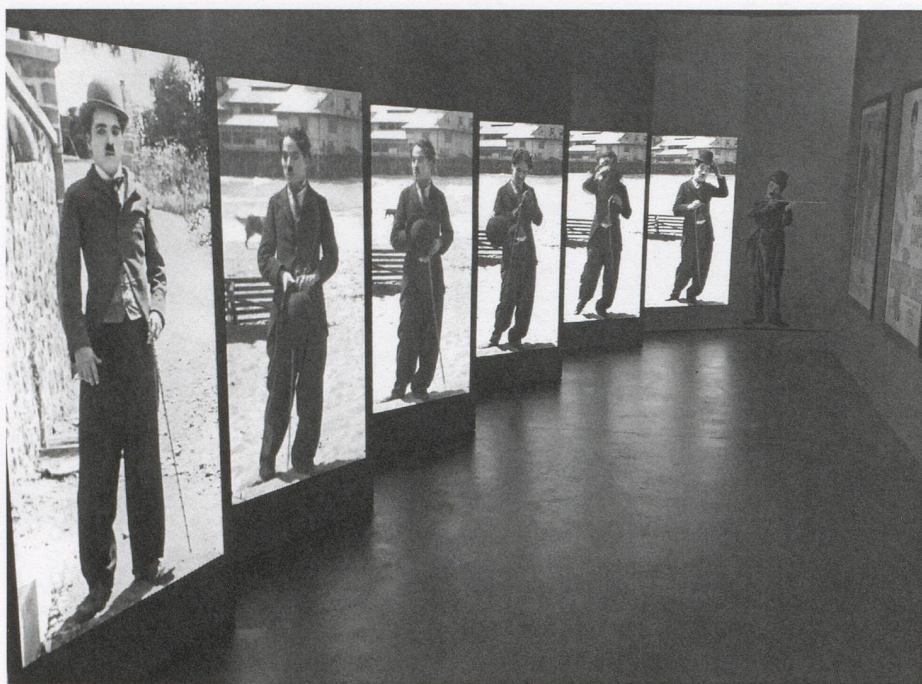
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## Chaplin Museum opens in Switzerland



After more than 15 years of planning, a new immersive museum of filmmaker Charlie Chaplin has opened at his former Swiss home near Lake Geneva. It cost at least CHF60 million and is dedicated to his life and work.

Chaplin's World is set on 10 acres of grounds on the Manoir de Ban built in 1840 above Vevey in canton Vaud, where Chaplin spent the last 25 years of his life. He died there at the age of 88 in 1977. He is buried in the nearby Corsier-sur-Vevey cemetery, along with his wife.

With spectacular views of the lake and Alps, the refurbished former family home where he lived with his wife Oona and their eight children, is just half of the museum focusing on the comic legend's private life.

A new studio displays recreated sets and embedded film screens. Visitors can experience what it was like to walk down "Easy Street" or be in a cabin teetering on the edge of a cliff, like in *Gold Rush*. Elsewhere, you can sit in the barber's chair from "The Great Dictator" or look in at the restaurant where he ate in "The Immigrant". It also houses endless clips from his films, interactive exhibits and multimedia installations, and a 150-seat cinema.

Grevin wax museum in Paris created 30 wax lifelike models of Chaplin, wife Oona, actors and actresses from his films, and friends like Albert Einstein, as well as artists inspired by his work such as Michael Jackson, Woody Allen and Federico Fellini.

To complete Chaplin's portrait as a writer, composer and producer, the project developers had access to 81 films, 15,000 photos stocked at the Elysée Museum in Lausanne and 200,000 documents archived in Montreux.

Iconic objects associated with Chaplin's work are on display, including his bowler hat and cane of his Little Tramp character, the certificate signed by Queen Elizabeth II when Chaplin was knighted in 1975 as well as an honorary Academy Award and an Oscar from Hollywood which he won for the score of his film "Limelight".

### Obstacles on the way

It took seven years to get a building permit, overcoming scepticism from the locals and political authorities. It was feared that a Disney World-like park would ruin the Chaplin heritage and landscape.

The organisers had to wait five years to settle a lawsuit brought by a neighbour worried about the project. Empty since 2008, the manor also required major renovation work.

### Charlie Chaplin's life

Charles Spencer Chaplin was born on April 16, 1889 in Walworth, South London. He made his first appearance on stage in 1894 in a London music hall replacing his mother who had taken ill during the performance. From a broken home, Chaplin spent many years of his early youth in a workhouse along with his brother Sydney.

Chaplin began his career as an actor on the English stage in 1903, toured the United States as a member of the Karno troupe in 1910 and made his first appearance in 1914 in films for the Keystone Studios.

Chaplin's "Tramp" character first appeared on screen in 1914 in one of his early Keystone films, "Kid Auto Races". The character helped make him a leading Hollywood star. Chaplin founded United Artists together with Douglas Fairbanks, DW Griffith and Mary Pickford in 1919.

He defied the arrival of sound in films with the release of commercial and critical successes, "City Lights" (1931) and "Modern Times" (1936). In 1947, he was accused of being a communist sympathiser and left the United States for good in 1952 and settled in Switzerland.

He made his last film, "A Countess from Hong Kong", in 1966.

by Simon Bradley

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