

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 75 (2009)
Heft: [10]

Artikel: Nativity scenes
Autor: Brühlmann, Trudi
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-944541>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 20.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>



Nativity Scenes

A nativity scene is a depiction of the birth of Jesus as described in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. While the term "nativity scene" includes two-dimensional depictions in painting, printmaking and other media, the term popularly refers to static, three-dimensional, commercial or folk art dioramas, or pantomimes called "living nativity scenes" in which real humans (and sometimes animals) participate.

rate and ever more elaborate static exhibitions with wax and ivory figurines garbed in rich fabrics set against intricate landscapes.

All over the Christian world we find the main figures in varying sizes, carved in wood, formed in clay or papier maché, felted or created in any other conceivable material. They are displayed during the Christmas season in churches, homes, shopping

later we made the whole set ourselves, in clay, with some artistic licence; one of our Magi arrived by elephant...

Those of us who went to school in Switzerland might remember the Swiss version of living nativity scenes, the Krippenspiel, performed mainly at school, with angels losing wings and halos, shepherds forgetting their lines and their cardboard sheep, Magi draped in moth-eaten velvety curtains, Mary stumbling over her feet, unholy pride for being chosen over a rival as Joseph - and still, it was all part of Christmas and added to our excitement!

from the internet and tb



Traditional "Brienzer Holzkrippe"

Nativity scenes exhibit at least figures representing the infant Jesus, his mother Mary, and Mary's husband Joseph. Some nativity scenes include other characters from the Biblical story such as shepherds, the Magi, and angels. Saint Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first nativity scene in 1223, a "living" one, intending thereby to cultivate the worship of Christ. The scene's popularity inspired communities throughout Christendom to stage similar pantomimes and eventually to create elabo-

rate and ever more elaborate static exhibitions with wax and ivory figurines garbed in rich fabrics set against intricate landscapes. The Vatican has displayed a scene in St. Peter's Square near its Christmas tree since 1982, and the Pope has for many years blessed the mangers of children assembled in St. Peter's Square for this special ceremony.

Nativity scenes have a long tradition in Switzerland, too. I remember the cut out figurines we placed in the twigs under the Christmas tree (and fighting over the arrangement: surely the shepherds have to be closer to the Holy Family than the Magi!), and

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editorial/Äs Wort vom Präsident	2
Carolyn Lane	3
Schmutzli	4
Club News	5-9
Children:	10
Get into the Christmas mood	11
St Nicholas pushes Santa to sidelines	12
The stubborn donkey	13
Shepherds in biblical times	14
Concrete giants	15
Early English helps Swiss children learn French	16
Environmentalists target noisy heliskiers/Recipe	17
Child labour threatens chocolate's sweet image	18
Living with the big alpine wolf/Obituary	19
Christrose/Hellebore	20