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PICASSO'S PERSONAL GIFT TO BASLE

The news that the great artist has made a present of four of his pictures to the town of Basle has created a stir all over the world. Look out for the whole story in the next issue of the "Swiss Observer".

CULTURAL LIFE IN JANUARY 1968

The first weeks of the New Year will bring a flood of art exhibitions throughout Switzerland, of which the following are worthy of special mention: A collective showing titled "Zurich Artists" at the Kunsthalle in Berne; a joint exhibition by Alois Carigiet and Leonhard Meisser at the Grisons Art Museum in Coire, and an unusual exhibition titled "Ways and Experiments of Young Artists" at Zurich's Museum of Fine Arts.

Basle's famous Ethnological Museum will present two winter exhibitions, one devoted to trade with the Orient in ancient times, and the other, titled "Shadow Plays", an exquisite amalgamation of the exotic and the artistic. Also in Basle, the Gymnastics and Sports Museum is featuring "Sports in Mexico", a showing which spans the broad horizon from ancient sports to the forthcoming Olympic Games of 1968.

[S.N.T.O.]

CULTURAL DECENTRALISATION IN SWITZERLAND

Federalism which is one of Switzerland's outstanding features, would tend to have a restrictive effect if it were not accompanied by an equally strong trend towards cultural decentralisation. In this connection, let us draw attention to the creation of a "Solothurn Film Festival Society" in Solothurn, a town of some 20,000 inhabitants in an industrial area. This group, founded by a number of cinema enthusiasts, who had organised a Film Festival in Solothurn in 1966, has sought and found support outside the Canton, in various parts of Switzerland such as Zurich, Lausanne, Geneva, the Ticino, etc. The eminence of its committee members and the very favourable comments in the Swiss press reporting its first two festivals augur well for the success of the Third Solothurn Film Festival, to be held in Solothurn of 20th and 21st January. The programme includes an examination of independent Swiss film production during 1967, with the projection of all films that have been awarded prizes by the Confederation, together with the showing of foreign documentaries, a lecture by a foreign producer, as well as open debates between producers, critics and the public, which will form a very important part of the meeting.

[O.S.E.C.]

PORCELAIN IN 45,000 VARIETIES

The porcelain manufactured in Nyon near Geneva has become quite well-known. But what is little known is the fact that there are 92 separate designs available which can be combined in no fewer than 490 different ways. Simple arithmetic yields a total of 45,080 possible decorative patterns, of which the famous "Bleuets" (cornflower pattern) constitute only a small part. Nyon's porcelain museum, which was recently renovated, is attracting increasing numbers of art lovers and porcelain enthusiasts from throughout the world.

[S.N.T.O.]

"SWITZERLAND TODAY" OFF TO A FLYING START

A new English-language magazine has appeared on the scene to fill a long-felt need here. Called "Switzerland Today", it began publication last June and has turned out six attractive and entertaining monthly issues so far. The new publication is designed to serve three main audiences: English-speaking people living in Switzerland, the thousands of tourists who constantly pass through, and people abroad who have a special interest in things Swiss. A notable feature of the magazine is its unique structure. Each issue is divided into three sections: First come general articles about all aspects of Swiss life; this is followed by a short story written by an outstanding Swiss author and translated into English — usually for the first time; and finally there is "This Month in Switzerland", a 16-page section providing full information on all major events throughout the country, plus recommendations of selected hotels, restaurants, nightspots and excursions in more than a dozen Swiss cities and resorts. "Switzerland Today" is available on subscription (from Transpublications, Torgasse 6, 8001 Zurich), and through such channels as American Express, Swissair, municipal tourist offices, and on sale at local newsstands.

[S.N.T.O.]

THE BIGGEST SKI COURSE IN THE WORLD

This year for the first time, the Swiss Ski School Managers' and Guests' Courses, organised by the Swiss Ski School Association and scheduled for 2nd to 16th December, were held at two places simultaneously. In order to meet heavy demand and to assure the best possible hotel accommodations for participants, the organisation decided to divide the 1967 courses between the two prominent resorts of Gstaad (Bernese Oberland) and Villars (Canton of Vaud). Skiers had a wide choice of prepared runs of all degrees of difficulty, and at Gstaad there is also an excellent cross-country *piste* for the use of the special class in cross-country ski-ing. There were more than 4,000 participants, so that despite the appearance of many other pre-season ski-ing courses throughout the country, this event will still retain its title of "the biggest ski course in the world". It was divided into two one-week sessions, 2nd to 9th December and 9th to 16th December, and instruction was given by specially selected instructors with excellent linguistic qualifications.

The course was originally created as a training session for the managers of the more than 130 Swiss Ski Schools. The idea was to "instruct the instructors" in uniform techniques before the season began, so that winter guests from all over the world would be able to learn the same techniques and ski-ing styles no matter where in Switzerland they chanced to be. Soon a "practice group" was added to the course, consisting of enthusiastic ski-ing students from Switzerland and abroad. This group of "guests" soon grew to such proportions that it became necessary to separate the two types of instruction. Today there are separate courses given for ski school managers and for guests, the latter classes being divided not only according to ski-ing skills but also by nationality and language. But instruction is uniform for all. In addition to the ski-ing, considerable attention is given to social life and the cultivation of international contacts, within the framework of *après-ski* activities.

[S.N.T.O.]