

The Basel Carnival

Basel Fasnacht (carnival) is a large festival of sounds and dreams, of colour and fantasy, but also of criticism and mockery. It has been evolving over the last 100 years. Since then, and now, this carnival has inspired the population and artists of this city into active participation, not only during carnival time but also all year round. The city's population uses this festival to vent their real opinions in a humorous and colourful way and to act and behave differently from their normal day to day live. For three days a year Basel lives in a different world.

UNESCO, the specialized agency of the United Nations for education, science and culture, maintains lists of selected customs, arts and buildings worthy of protection and increased attention. Basel Fasnacht is on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Part of Switzerland's application to UNESCO was a film. This can be seen on the touchscreen beside the entrance (> Video > Fasnacht in 10 minutes).

1 From 'böse Fasnacht' ('bad carnival') to major event

The earliest documented reference to our Basel Fasnacht relates to a bloodbath: on the day before Ash Wednesday in 1376, a tournament held on the Münsterplatz (cathedral square) ended in a riot which is described in history books as the 'böse Fasnacht'.

The first official bans on Fasnacht and drumming were recorded in the Book of Ordinances in the early 15th century, presumably because of the use of drums and pipes in association with 'lewd and abandoned dancing'. These official edicts also relate to the masked beggars who trooped through the streets as early as Advent in 1418. Such bans clearly proved to be effective since, commencing in the 2nd decade of the 16th century, the wearing of masks was only forbidden during the actual Fasnacht period, albeit without lasting effect.

Carnival-like revels on the Monday following Ash Wednesday predated the Reformation and are therefore far from being (as is occasionally suggested) a defiant gesture against the Catholics in the wake of the schism of 1529. The authorities tried to forbid Fasnacht in 1546 arguing that, since the Reformation had abolished the 40 days of fasting, anticipatory pre-Lenten merrymaking had become superfluous. Thanks to the chronicler Fridolin Ryff we know that, at least since 1540, home guard and Fasnacht were closely interrelated phenomena: masked figures were involved on the Monday after Ash Wednesday in the review of Basel guilds and corporations based just outside the town walls. Contemporary sources during the centuries that followed described processions of military appearance which also included masked figures, as well as carnival-like events in private houses and in the guild halls. One such event was the carnival procession announced by the 'Zum hohen Dolder' suburban corporation in 1783.

After the Helvetic revolution, it was only from 1802 onwards, when the serious political turmoil had abated, that the people of Basel began to celebrate Fasnacht again. Initially, the big parades

organised by the citizenry were not annual events and, in fact, they had little in common with the Fasnacht procession as we know it today. The fact that German words such as 'Fasching' and 'Karneval' were used throughout the 19th century shows that many elements were borrowed from various parts of Germany during that period.

Following the division of the Basel cantons of 1832/33, the upper classes withdrew from Fasnacht for a few decades. In the years 1842 and 1843, well-meaning people tried to turn Fasnacht into a festival for the young. Then, after the formation of the Swiss Federation (1848), political topics were increasingly being aired at Fasnacht. Quite soon lanterns began to make their appearance, initially only at Morgenstreich. During the second half of the 19th century the Fasnacht parades, often masterminded by an artist, still closely resembled the historic festive processions which were particularly popular at the time. Not infrequently, though, these parades attracted sharp criticism. Some of them made fun of foreign potentates or the papacy and, as a result, kept the courts and diplomats busy.

Catholic Basel only began its gradual acceptance of Basel's Fasnacht from 1890 onwards, although Catholic groups continued to celebrate 'their' Fasnacht in events held in public premises prior to Ash Wednesday. Quodlibet, the club founded in 1858, not only organised balls, but — from 1866 onwards — processions, too. In 1884 it for the first time awarded prizes to particularly witty Sujets (carnival subjects). This club, which was mainly composed of 'new citizens', increasingly sought to ensure order and a higher standard of Fasnacht activity. It is thanks to Quodlibet and to other such organisations that Fasnacht gradually developed its own Basel style during the last decades of the 19th century. It is no coincidence that Quodlibet members were actively involved in 1910 in forming the Fasnachts-Comité (carnival committee) which remains active to this day. Nowadays, however, the impetus comes from the Basel tourist office.

Some more dates:

- 1906 The first Monstre-Trommelkonzert (Mammoth Drumming Concert) held in the Burgvogtei and the first lantern exhibition (in the courtyard of the Steinenschule).
- 1909 'Prinz Karneval' rides along with the procession for the last time.
- 1910 The Fasnachts-Comité is founded.
- 1911 The first Fasnacht Plakette (badge) — and the last Morgenstreich on a Wednesday as well.
- 1915 Foundation of the Vereinigte Schnitzelbankgesellschaft Basel (VSGB).
- 1920 Foundation of the Basler Schnitzelbank-Gesellschaft (BSG).
- 1921 Foundation of the Schnitzelbank-Comité. Foundation of the Herrenmattli Wagenclique, the oldest, still active Wagenverein (a group parading with float).
- 1924 The spelling 'Fastnacht' (with 'st') appears on the Plakette for the last time.

- 1925 The Basel state art fund announces a competition for Fasnacht masks. Paul Wilde wins 1st prize with his 'Anishansli' mask.
- 1939 A Catholic group takes part in the parade for the first time. It is composed of members of the men's gymnastics club which takes its name from the Church of the Holy Spirit (they call themselves the 'Güete Bonjour Clique').
- 1939 The first women-only Clique is founded ('Die Abverheyte').
- 1945 The Fasnachts-Comité organises a Fasnacht exhibition in the Kunsthalle as a substitute for Fasnacht, cancelled for the sixth time because of the war.
- 1946 The clock of St. Martins Church strikes four on Monday morning 11th March, signalling the end of the years without Fasnacht and providing an outlet for long pent-up Fasnacht enthusiasm.
- 1951 The Gugge-IG is founded as the first association for Gugge musicians (people playing discordant music on instruments of every kind). Another group, the FG (= Freie Guggemusiken) is formed in 1965.
- 1962 The first Morgenstreich without Gugge groups. In compensation, the piccolo and drumming Cliques allow them to parade and perform on the Tuesday evening (which is known as 'Guggezyschtig').
- 1974 The Wage-IG is founded for Cliques which parade with float.
- 1976 Other concerts – the 'Charivari', the 'Pfyfferli' and the 'Räppli-Serenade' – start up in competition to the Monstre-Trommelkonzert. Other pre-Fasnacht events follow.
- 1987 As a result of a collision of dates with the MUBA fair, the lantern exhibition moves to Münsterplatz – an innovation which proves very popular.
- 1993 The Monstre-Trommelkonzert takes place in the large festival hall of Basel Exhibition for the first time, relocating from the Kuchlin Theatre where this most traditional of all pre-Fasnacht events had been held since 1914.
- 2004 The Comité adds a new badge to the three traditional Plakette. This is the Bijoux, a mini-version costing one hundred francs.
- 2010 The Fasnachts-Comité celebrates its centennial anniversary.
- 2013 The Musical Theater becomes the fifth location for the Monstre-Trommelkonzert.
- 2017 Basel Fasnacht is appointed as world cultural heritage by UNESCO.

2 Tambourmajor (drum major) and Obmann (head of the Clique)

The visual impact created by a drum major is one of the most impressive aspects of Fasnacht. He or she strides majestically between piccolo players and drummers, wearing an impressive costume topped by an outsize mask which together form a key element in the subject being lampooned by the Clique. The drum major's mace keeps the musicians in time and is also useful when making obeisance to specially favoured on lookers. Despite an air of authority, the drum major is not the leader of the band of drummers. That role is taken by a drummer-in-chief, marching at the outside left position in the back row. Ideally he or she should be very tall so as to be able to keep an eye on the group as a whole. The piccolo players are watched over in the same way by their piccolo chief. Incidentally, the head of the Clique is not necessarily any of these three (drum major, drumming chief, piccolo chief).

3 The Cortège — the big parade

In those far-off days, when the badge was called an 'Abzeichen' instead of a Plakette and when Basel's carnival was still spelled 'Fastnacht' (that is, with an interpolated 't'), the Cortège on the Monday and Wednesday afternoons was a far less elaborate parade than it is today.

The number of Cliques, 'Zügli' (little groups) and floats was manageable in those days and women were almost always confined to riding in a Chaise or carriage. Leafing back through the annals of Fasnacht, we see that during the whole of the 19th century Basel's festive carnival processions were virtually indistinguishable from those in other areas.

Today, impressive and immensely colourful parades are a feature of the two afternoons. There are so many active participants that the Fasnachts-Comité has had to devise a highly convoluted route to avoid bottlenecks and to ensure that spectators can, without hindrance, enjoy the rich variety of sounds, colours and carnival humour.

4 Clique and Comité

The word 'Clique' is a generic term applied to a group of people who club together in order to celebrate Fasnacht. Their sharing of the carnival experience breeds a spirit of togetherness within the Clique: a secondary effect is that there are strikingly few contacts between one organised group and another. Clique members meet throughout the year and therefore often also socialise at events unrelated to Fasnacht. Some people enjoy a very firm bond with their Clique which remains close to their hearts throughout their lives.

Each Clique has a link to the Fasnachts-Comité, the official body which has ensured since Fasnacht 1911 that the 'drei scheenschte Dääg' ('the three most magnificent days') run smoothly. Organised in the form of a society, the Comité is composed of 10-15 men and — since 1999 — also women, who all act in an honorary capacity. Each member has a specific responsibility and maintains contact with the individual authorities. Collaboration with police, fire brigade and building department is a major priority. The Comité also organises the Monstre-Trommelkonzert, the Plakette and the publication of Rädäbäng (the Fasnacht guide). The revenue generated by sales of these Plakette goes into the subsidy distributed to those carnival groups who register for

the parade. The Fasnachts-Comité has a secretariat which handles carnival matters throughout the year.

5 Bangg, Zeedel and Zyttige

Basel people are known far and wide for their sharp wit, which emerges in its highest form during the carnival period. Fasnacht abounds with poetry and prose. Take, for example, the 'Zugszedel' distributed by the groups parading in the Cortège. Printed on lengths of coloured paper in the form of rhyming doggerel (sometimes brilliant, sometimes rather less so) and written in Basel-German of varying degrees of purity, these refer in humorous terms to the Sujet selected by the Clique. Then there are the couplets inscribed on lanterns and floats and also the very special 'Schnitzelbänke', or satirical verses, which are sung on the Monday and Wednesday evening in packed bars and restaurants in the centre of town by balladeers ('Bänggler'), who tend to become increasingly hoarse as the evening wears on. Many listeners take particular pleasure in figuring out the illustrations which the 'Bänggler' display to accompany each stanza. Incidentally, these singers are considered particularly skilful when they can save their punch line until the very end of a verse; indeed, choice examples often reap prolonged applause.

6 Drumming and piccolo playing

The marches performed by the drum and piccolo players are not infrequently the work of well-known composers. Apart from modern pieces inspired by jazz or by the classics, which testify to the dynamics and versatility of this special Basel music culture, a Clique's repertoire is mainly made up of traditional tunes which have their origin in folk melodies and, in particular, in the old military marches and mustering calls. The 'Morgestreich' march, for example, and the first 9 verses of the 'Alte Schweizer Märsche' are based on an old military rallying call known as the 'Sammlung' and the 'Feldschritte' - or slow march - used for troop movements.

These tunes, in common with Basel drum and piccolo playing in general, were not composed in this town on the bend of the Rhine, but are derived from Swiss and French military traditions or, to be more precise, were passed down by the many Swiss regiments which used to serve under the French flag. They were inherited from the Feldspiel, the military bands who accompanied the foot soldiers in the 15th century Federation.

Their military origin also comes to mind when one watches the Cliques parade through the streets at military pace and in their strict marching formation. Significantly, this musical heritage explains why the enthusiasm of Basel's drummers and piccolo players does not express itself in the form of carnivalesque good cheer, unrestrained exuberance and high spirits: something which outsiders often find puzzling and confusing.

7 Drum notations and individual Clique styles

Despite growing harmonisation of drumming styles in recent years, many marches are drummed differently from one Clique to another. As Basel drumming developed, various phonetic and written versions began to appear ('Schnuuredrummle', 'Hieroglyphen', musical notations) along

with a variety of Clique styles shaped by prominent drumming teachers. A joint repertoire does exist for 'Hieroglyphen' and Berger-notation style drummers. In many cases, however, differences in interpretation as regards stress, rolls, rhythm and tempo make it difficult for pupils of different schools to drum together.

8 From improvised music group to Guggenmusik

Nothing divides Basel's carnival lovers more than Guggenmusik, and yet it is pointless to debate whether or not the groups which play this cacophonous music should be entitled to perform at Fasnacht. In actual fact, Guggenmusik has been part of Basel's carnival for a very long time. Groups of musicians playing what can only be termed a strange combination of instruments are documented as far back as 1800. And, judging by its name, the 'humoristische Zukunftsmusik' ('humorous music of the future'), which appeared during a parade in 1871, was hardly likely to have been serious in content.

Today, there are about 65 Guggenmusik groups, most of them with male and female members. Their influence as an integrating element for newcomers to Basel wishing to take an active part in Fasnacht cannot be underestimated. Finally, it is incontestable that Basel is the birthplace of the Guggenmusik movement which today encompasses the whole of central Europe and even beyond.

10 Morgenstreich — or: the hours between dreamtime and daytime

'Säalig gniesse', these words in Basel dialect can be loosely translated as 'blissful enjoyment'. This is the sentiment which floats like a golden cloud over the 72 hours of carnival heaven. The term describes what both active and passive carnival participants relish most: they want to enjoy in a quiet and introverted manner every moment of the time between Morgenstreich and Endstreich. When the clock strikes four on Monday and all the city lights go out, that is when the enjoyment begins, made all the more poignant because everyone knows that this masquerade is of cruelly short duration. Then comes the moment when the drum major gives the command 'Ach — tung! Dr Morgestraich - vorwärts, marsch!' Although it is the first march, it is played on-the-spot, but in formation. Only after this overture does movement start as each Clique embarks on its own route in the early morning darkness, illuminated by nothing more than its processional lantern and smaller head-mounted and hand-held lanterns.

On this early morning — for which every participant has been eagerly waiting all year - people file through the streets, stopping now and then for a warming 'Mehlsuppe' (flour soup) and wedge of 'Käse-' or 'Zwiebelwähe' (cheese or onion quiche).

11 Harlequin

In recent years, this comic figure of Italian commedia dell'arte has become the most popular of carnival figures. Some researchers see the harlequin as being the medieval English 'harilo-king', the leader of the Wild Horde, or ghostly army, which has a firm place in European folk beliefs.

12 The lantern — pride and joy of the Clique

The lantern is the pride and joy of every Clique. It is not unusual — inter alia because of the limited size of most studios — for the often several meter-high canvas structure only to be completed a few days before Morgenstreich. The lantern is produced by an artist who paints vivid pictures imbued with carnival wit. Internally-mounted lighting ensures that these images shine out far and wide.

The Basel carnival lantern was born in 1845, when the police banned the use of blazing torches during the Morgenstreich parade because of safety considerations. Lanterns were chosen as an alternative, and it was not long before artists began decorating them on all sides.

We know the names of only a few of those who created the large lanterns of the main Cliques during this early period. They were more likely to have been house painters and decorators (such as Samuel Baur) rather than professional artists. The situation changed at the turn of the century and then especially after the First World War. From 1919 onwards, more and more lanterns bore the hallmark of a generation of artists familiar with the latest artistic trends: indeed, some had even studied in major European art centres.

Many Cliques traditionally fetch their lantern from the artist late on the Sunday afternoon. Their piccolo players, accompanied by the rest of the Clique, all of them wearing civilian clothes, then pipe it (swathed in some concealing covering) to the place from which they will set off at Morgenstreich. When the lantern is lit for the first time, shortly before four in the morning, the members of the Clique will (more often than not) agree: ‘Mir hänn wider e scheeni Lambbe!’ (‘Haven't we got a beautiful lantern again!’).

13 How lantern is made

Every lantern painter has his or her own style: most — including those at work today — have found a means of expression which combines folk art with a reflection of contemporary movements in art.

Not every lantern is made in the same way. Once the design has been perfected on the basis of a succession of sketches, it is transferred to a canvas that has been stretched over a frame and treated with an undercoat. Some artists do this freehand, some are guided by a faint cross-cross of shadowy lines, others work with the help of a slide projector. A wide variety of paints are used; the only criterion being that light must be able to pass through them: coloured Indian inks, stains, watercolours, aniline, oil or fabric paints. Once the outside has been completed, any parts which fail to stand out sufficiently are painted on the inside too; this is called ‘back painting’. Finally, the verses and epigrams are added — not forgetting the all-important witticisms on the door which provides access to the internal lights. Generally speaking, once the lantern is ready, Morgenstreich cannot be far away!

14 The traditional way of making a Fasnacht mask

A three-dimensional mould is made from clay on the basis of a sketch. Once the clay model begins to dry, it is coated with a thin layer of Vaseline so that the thickly applied plaster can subsequently

be easily removed. The inside of this plaster cast, which serves as the negative mould, is treated with a special lacquer. After it has dried, the inner surface is coated with Vaseline too. Now the laminating begins: mask paper (in about 200 g quality) is torn into short strips, coated with paste, arranged in the mould and pressed down firmly. Four layers are usually enough. After initial drying, the 'raw' mask is detached from the hollow mould, placed on a rack and allowed to dry completely at room temperature. White undercoat is then applied to the outside and the inside is coated with shellac. Once the blank is dry again, superfluous cardboard edges are trimmed off. The mask is then painted using acrylic paints, emulsion and artist's oil paints. Not infrequently, a few brush strokes and splodges of paint are all that are needed to give the mask the desired expression.

The future wearer of the mask tries on this 'second face' in combination with a form of rigid cap called a 'Güpfli'. Holes are cut into the mask for the eyes, nostrils and mouth, and the mask is then riveted on to the 'Güpfli'. The wig (made, for example, from hemp, raffia or sisal), and possibly a hat and/or some special decoration, are then firmly secured in place.

15 A joint effort

The most important meetings during the year of a Fasnacht group include the 'Sujetsitzungen' (discussions of the subject) and the 'Lämbbesitzung' (post festum). Whereas the latter serves to talk over the past Fasnacht and to air any grievances (and can occasionally lead to the group's splitting up), the sessions devoted to choosing the subject consider which event the Clique would like to make fun of at Fasnacht. Once the choice has been made, the artists and poets, who often remain faithful to a Clique for many years, consider how to stage their subject. Designs are prepared for the masks and costumes to be worn by the 'Vorträbler', or vanguard, and by the piccolo players, drummers, drum major and 'Wägeler' (those travelling in an open cart). Orders are then despatched in good time to the mask studio and to the dressmaker. The person entrusted with the writing of the 'Zeedel' (printed doggerel verse setting out the subject) withdraws to work on his or her composition in a process known as 'Värslibrinzle', and the person responsible for the accompanying wagon instructs the team to ensure that it makes a worthy final element in the formation and properly reflects the chosen subject.

16 Is Fasnacht a luxury? Is it a waste of money?

Questions such as these have been raised in the past and often also appear in the daily papers. It goes without saying that genuine Fasnachtler will never agree with such controversial suggestions. Indeed, they are quite likely to point out how important this period of revelry is for the local economy. Psychologists will speak of the beneficial effects of letting off steam during Fasnacht: when people can get things off their chest and express themselves freely. Active participants are even assured that they infect onlookers with their zest for life and thereby cheer people up. Those who have no patience with Fasnacht, or who go so far as to consider it the work of the devil, had better stay away. In the old days, such critics would escape temporarily to the Chrischona, a hill just outside Basel: today they might even resort to handing out protest leaflets. And what about those stick-in-the-muds not bitten by the Fasnacht bug? They go off skiing, or else seek the sun in the Caribbean!

The hordes of spectators and the huge numbers of active participants — put at well over 20,000 —

reflect the unmitigated enthusiasm generated by this great festival, which can truly be said to resemble a mosaic composed of myriad individual pieces.

17 Not age-old

A fascinating aspect of what is now regarded as an important part of local custom is not, in fact, rooted in ancient tradition. Until the 1920s, masks tended to be imported, although they were often subsequently painted and adapted to individual requirements. Most of these masks were made in workshops in Saxonia and Thuringia (Germany). In contrast, Waggis masks came from a factory in Italy while the delicate wax half-masks came from Holland, France and Italy.

Roughly between 1920 and 1939 a Basel firm, Métraux-Bucherer in the Freie Strasse, became involved in the distribution, and increasingly later also in the manufacture, of masks. That company's relatively lightweight and yet hard-wearing wax half-masks were made of glued canvas which was placed over a positive plaster cast and pressed into shape using the negative.

18 The Basel artist's mask

Looking more carefully at illustrations of Fasnacht from around the end of the 19th century one notes that, while faces were often hidden behind a mask, these aids to concealment often looked very different from their modern counterparts, being generally made of glued canvas coated with wax. They were sold by costume hirers and toy merchants, who imported them from abroad.

After the First World War, two young Fasnacht enthusiasts began to wonder if there were no alternative to imported goods. The theatre painter and mask-maker Paul Rudin taught Alphonse ('Fuffi') Magne and Adolf Tschudin how to make masks by moulding together multiple layers of paper strips. The first moulded masks made their appearance in Basel in 1921 when Rudin was commissioned to provide masks for the Fasnachtsgesellschaft Olympia. Working in a studio in the Weisse Gasse, Magne and Tschudin continued to explore a variety of possibilities. They experimented, for example, with a mass composed of wood pulp, clay, chalk and glue. This was kneaded, rolled out and used to line the negative (as if it were a cake tin), which was then left to dry. However, these masks were very fragile and so, from 1927 on, it became conventional to work with the kind of masking paper made from wood cellulose that is normally used by house painters to protect a floor.

In about 1925 the Basel mask-making pioneers went their separate ways. Adolph Tschudin, owner of a small toy and novelties factory, specialised above all in the production of one-off masks for balls, employing artists to design and paint the models. 'Fuffi' Magne preferred to produce masks for Cliques, but he also involved artists in the manufacturing process. Early on, his son Roger learned the art of mask-making and also became a skilled lantern painter. Following the death of his father in 1965, Roger Magne decided together with his wife to keep the studio going. Today, the third generation is already active in the business.

The production method developed in the 1920s and the involvement of Basel artists in creating masks very soon made this type of artist's mask the norm. The number of workshops grew, particularly after 1945. This trade, the skill of which helps to make Basel's 'three most beautiful

days of the year' such a success, employs a small army of people in various studios for at least six months of the year.

19 The Waggis

This apparition in a blue farmer's smock is one of the classic Basel Fasnacht figures. Characterised by an outsize nose, the Waggis only began to appear in its present form in around the year 1950. Nevertheless, the earliest pictorial record of this figure at Basel Fasnacht dates from 1874. The word 'Waggis', in contrast, has been traced back to the late 1830s, when it appeared in a humorous French genre painting entitled 'Physionomie du Wagges'.

It was only after a young Prussian Lieutenant – serving in Zabern (Saverne) in 1913 – by the name of von Forstner addressed Alsatian soldiers as 'Ihr Wackes!', that this harmless and affectionate local term became a form of abuse when used by non-Alsatians. Forstner's pejorative use of the word led to the 'Zabern Incident' which was marked by debates in the Reichstag and vitriolic attacks in France. In the end, the official representative of the German Reich had to step down and the minister of state handed in his resignation. This incident on the eve of the First World War stirred up Alsatian-German resentment to new heights.

20 Dr Masggi – a bygone delight

Masked balls used to be a great tradition in Basel. They were held on the Monday and Wednesday of Fasnacht, particularly lavish ones being those organised in the Stadt-Casino (which opened in 1826) and in the city theatre (opened in 1834). In many cases, generous prizes served as an incentive for lively masked revels. Rather less enthusiasm was expressed – at least by the police chief – when it was discovered as long ago as 1853 that many ladies of dubious reputation had been taking the train from Mulhouse to Basel to participate in Fasnacht balls. Children's balls were immensely popular, too. These were held on Fasnacht Tuesday in all the major restaurants in town.

The last flowering of Basel's masked ball tradition emerged in the 1920s, with events taking place in almost every public establishment. Interest waned steadily from the early 1960s onwards and the balls finally ceased after the 'Kehraus' (farewell celebration) in 1971.

Also worth to mention is the legendary „Zyschtigsfescht“ (Tuesday Festival) of the artist group „33“ with many famous painters of lanterns, designer of masks etc.

21 Masks from Atelier 'nase'

Between 1946 and 1956, the graphic artist Heiri Strub (born in 1916) joined forces with his wife Lotti and some of their friends to run the 'nase' mask-making studio. Their clientele was primarily composed of people taking part in Fasnacht as individuals ('Einzelmasken') and devotees of the masked balls.

In 1951, the artist Alexander Zschokke, whose brother was Minister of Education, painted a public mural of a blacksmith who resembled Stalin. This was satirized at the following Fasnacht by a

young man from an important Basel family. The impacted family were not impressed and managed to find out the name of this man. As a result, he never participated in any procession again.

22 'Larve' versus 'Maske'

Fasnacht revellers conceal their face behind a mask. Basel people use the term 'Larve' for this 'second face' rather than the normal German word 'Maske'. Here, the term 'Maske' is applied to a person dressed up in a carnival costume plus a mask. Special attention is paid in Basel to the way in which the 'Larve' is made.

The variety of masks in the city centre is incredible – during „Morgestraich“, at the parades or in the old alleys on the three evenings. There aren't just the classical Harlequin, the Pierrot, the Bajass, the Waggis or the Alti Dante, but also many imaginative creations or masks corresponding to the persiflage of a current topic.

In this room works of a whole series of Basel's mask studios of the 1930s to 1970s are represented: Tschudin, Magne, Gysin, Strub, Merian...

Thank you for returning this handout.