

Our Owl is Pink – Colourful Stories

What do colours hold for us human beings? What do we associate with colours in cultural terms? Colours are an expression of personality, they convey emotions, are decorative, and lend strength. The way they are perceived varies from colour to colour, between individuals, and according to cultural context. In the exhibition “Our Owl Is Pink” at the Museum der Kulturen Basel, around 200 exhibits tell colourful stories from all parts of the world. For the first time, the museum is staging an exhibition with extensive inclusive access – for children and families, as well as for people with hearing and visual impairments.

The exhibition “Our Owl Is Pink” was developed in collaboration with various feedback groups, including children and people who are visually impaired, blind, hearing impaired or completely deaf. It features simple language, an audio guide, and screens displaying sign language along with join-in-stations where you can apply all your senses. In the Creative Space occupying the entire last room of the exhibition, visitors are free to express joy, love, anger as they like using different colours and forms, and thus create their own colourful world – which will then, step by step, become part of the exhibition.

The little pink owl, which lent the exhibition its title, is from Mexico. It stands out in the opening exhibition space among its brown, grey, and white feathered friends – many of them vessel flutes like our pink owl. It also caught the eye of the exhibition team when they went through the storage spaces in search of suitable exhibits along with colourful stories.

A Burst of Colours

The exhibition explains why and how colours bring vibrancy and life to the world, often with people sparing no effort to create the right effect, as in the case of batik dyeing. Without colour, materials, shapes, and textures are no doubt visible but it is colour that makes all the difference. Colours lend objects that certain something, the necessary edge, even an own personality. A good example here are the Basel carnival masks in the second exhibition room.

But there is more to colours than meets the eye. People use them to show their true colours: In Ukraine, for example, colourfully embroidered white blouses, vyshyvanka, have become a symbol of resistance and solidarity. Endowed with societal and political relevance, colour has the power to bring people together. In Mexico, the colour ‘rosa Mexicano’ symbolizes a positive attitude to life.

In the third exhibition room, viewers are treated to a veritable burst of colours. No matter whether red, yellow, green or blue: colours not only adorn, they also protect, spread a festive mood, deepen faith, give strength and lend hope. Perception and meaning may vary from colour to colour, between individual people, and according to cultural background, but they always carry meaning.

The production of pigments and dyes is also a topic in the exhibition. Once a precious resource, dyes began being produced artificially in the middle of the 19th century, which not only made them cheaper but also raised demand. The wish for bright colours boosted trade, which at the time, however, was subject to the rules and mechanisms of colonialism, with consequences for people and the environment to this day.

The exhibition runs from 24 April 2026 to 24 January 2027. Feel free to download images of the exhibition from our [website](#).

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