

## SUN, MOON AND STARS

18 August 2017 – 20 January 2019

**Many cultures incorporate the sun, moon and stars into their understanding of the world. The exhibition at the Museum der Kulturen Basel sheds light on the role celestial bodies play for us humans on earth.**

Upon entering the exhibition, a rocket shoots the visitors not into space, as one might expect, but down to earth. According to the curator of the show, Alexander Brust, the aim is to change the visitors' perspective by reviewing the wide range of practices cultures across the world have developed around heavenly bodies. The stars of the show are the objects on display, many of them from the museum's own collections, including some veritable masterpieces.

Human beings have observed and created images of the sun, moon and stars since time immemorial, fascinating generations of anthropologists. The second gallery contains a selection of revealing examples. The objects are affixed to white rays of light, lending the show an extraterrestrial flair. Pictures taken from myths and legends, some of them romantically inspired, illustrate people's search for answers to phenomena that baffled them, the lunar eclipses being a typical case.

Societies gained knowledge from observing celestial bodies, for instance, with regard to spatial relations: stick charts, temple models and mandala are just some of the examples on hand. Here you also get the chance to relive the moon landing of 1969 and other space missions in the shape of plastic model kits. A station featuring sundials and assorted calendars goes to show that measuring time relies heavily on astronomical knowledge. A special highlight is the ensemble of Tikal lintels created for the Mayan rulers in the 8th century.

In the next gallery, visitors stroll through a cluster of blue, spiral-shaped bodies, disclosing the displayed objects in an almost spherical light. The topic is the personal relationship between humans and celestial bodies. Ethereal beings were often personified and venerated in the shape of deity figures, such as the Aztec sun god Tonatiuh. Shrines and masks – adorned with heavenly bodies – were incorporated in religious practices. Wearing "sun-flooded" garments lent people status and prestige while "star-lit" amulets promised protection. But the exhibition also reveals that people often seek protection from the sun by wearing hats and sunglasses. Shining testimony to the power of the sun comes at the end of this gallery in the shape of a carnival lantern created by the Rätz clique illustrating the legendary "summer of the century" of 2003.

In the last gallery viewers face a revolving stage; it represents the consistency and creativity with which humans have exploited the positive image of celestial bodies over the ages, particularly in politics where nations and political parties like to harness the sun's symbolic power for their own purposes. The same in marketing and sports where the motto often is "reach for the stars".

For kids there is a special educational track where they get to learn about the heavenly bodies in a fun way. The accompanying programme, too, is full of surprises. For more details go to <http://www.mkb.ch/de/programm/events/2017/Sonne-Mond-Sterne.html>

You can download this media release as well as photos from the show from our website: [http://www.mkb.ch/de/Informationen\\_Services/Mediendienste.html](http://www.mkb.ch/de/Informationen_Services/Mediendienste.html)

