



Reopening of the Museum der Kulturen Basel

6 September 2011

Publications in conjunction with the reopening of the Museum der Kulturen

To commemorate its reopening, the Museum der Kulturen is publishing two volumes: *Intrinsic Perspectives Volume 1* highlights the Museum's collections; *Intrinsic Perspectives Volume 2 – From Miss Kumbuk to Herzog & de Meuron* – is an appreciation of the architectural history of the Museum.

Intrinsic Perspectives Volume 1

The Museum der Kulturen Basel is one of Europe's great anthropological museums. The wide-ranging, world-famous collections contain more than 300,000 objects. Over the course of generations, the dedicated focus on specific fields has produced comprehensive collections of rarities and precious objects from Europe, Africa, the Americas, Oceania and Asia.

After two years of construction, the refurbished Museum der Kulturen invites visitors to enter a totally new ambience. The anthropological collections are ready to be studied, interpreted and viewed anew. The origins of the collections of the Museum der Kulturen go back to the middle of the nineteenth century. The collection of ancient American artefacts assembled by Lukas Vischer, a Basel businessman, became the core of the first anthropological collection in Europe open to the public. Initially, collecting was the preserve of wealthy private persons who travelled the continents and returned with interesting objects and evidence of the everyday life of indigenous cultures. What began as a small collection within a universal museum gradually developed under the influence of researchers such as Fritz and Paul Sarasin, Felix Speiser, Paul Wirz and Alfred Bühler into a centre of scientific work and an anthropological museum of international repute.

Intrinsic Perspectives Volume 1 offers an appreciation of the collections built up over the years by a number of prominent figures with great wisdom and foresight. The publication presents selected objects and discusses the intrinsic perspectives of each in the context of five central anthropological themes: affiliation, capacity to act, space, knowledge and performance. The volume is copiously illustrated. The innovative photographs present the objects in a delightfully refreshing visual language.

Intrinsic Perspectives Volume 2

From Miss Kumbuk to Herzog & de Meuron

The core of the building of what is now the Museum der Kulturen dates back to 1849. The neo-classical building designed by Melchior Berri was a decisive break with the still largely medieval architecture around Basel cathedral. The striking, outgoing project for the Museum's expansion by architects Herzog & de Meuron persuaded the Museum to dedicate a separate volume to the Museum's architectural history.

What were the conditions and circumstances of the architectural developments in the vicinity of the cathedral? How has the quarter in which the museum is located developed over the centuries? Why is there a relief of Miss Kumbuk, the first female elephant at Basel Zoo, on the Schlüsselberg façade of the Museum? What conflicts of interest – past and present – are reflected in the structure of the cathedral square in front of the Museum? These questions and many others are dealt with in the publication "From Miss Kumbuk to Herzog & de Meuron".

A number of authors examine architectural topics and issues of urban development and recount fascinating stories about the area surrounding the cathedral, including the Museum's roots in Basel society, its historical context, the architectural history of the cathedral square and the Museum in particular, and the decision to move the entrance of the Museum to the square. The photographs tell their own story of the construction, of old and new spaces and galleries, follow leads and trace vestiges, and turn the spotlight on precious objects.