

Zunft Haus zur Meisen

Consider ambience. The „Zur Meisen“ Guildhall is the most outstanding 18th century Rococo structure on the left shore of the river Limmat. Built during Zurich's Golden Age of Bodmer and Breitinger, it is amply deserving of its ranking as Zurich's most impressive and esthetically pleasing guildhall.

The „Zur Meisen“ Guild of vintners, publicans, saddlers and painters, was founded in 1336. When its Marktgasse domicile became too small, guild leaders commissioned renowned architect David Morf (1700-1773) to design the present Rococo palace with its French court of honor and elegant wrought iron gate.

Much care and planning went into the Guildhall's interiors. Johann Balthasar Bullinger's ceiling and wall paintings, the tiled tower stoves by Leonhard Locher and Hans Jakob Hofmann, and Tyrolian master Johann Schuler's artistic stuccoed ceilings are in as good a condition as on the day they were created.

The Guild has a history of drawing celebrities to its handsome precincts. Swiss author Gottfried Keller and the country's foremost painter, Ferdinand Hodler, were among the famous 19th century creative artists who frequented the Café „Zur Meisen“, and in our century, guests Luminaries included, at one time or another, Queen Elisabeth II, Sweden's King Gustav, President Jimmy Carter, and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

September 19th, 1946, was a particularly memorably date in Guildhall history. On that day British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, after delivering his now famous „United States of Europe“ speech at Zurich University, repaired to the Guildhall where he received the acclaim of an enthusiastic crowd of Zurich's citizens. A plaque set in the pavement outside the Guildhall commemorates both his stay and his prescient words.

The faience and porcelain collection at the Guildhall „Zur Meisen“

Gives a general view of the Swiss contribution towards the culture of faience and porcelain tableware in the 18th century. In Switzerland, this begins with the importation of foreign faience tableware. Our exhibition presents examples (mostly imported from Starsbourg, Lunéville and Künersberg) dating from the years before the foundation of the first efficient faience manufactures in Switzerland, followed by a distinguished picture of the production of faience tableware in our country starting around 1760. It then turns to porcelain and draws the visitors' interest to a pair of potopourris made of Meissen porcelain, in gold-plated bronze mounting, imported in 1766 from Paris for a house in Basel, and then to the artistic contributions of some Swiss for manufactures abroad (figures created by Franz Anton Bustelli in Nymphenburg around 1760). Finally the exhibition displays the production of the Swiss porcelain manufactures Zurich-Kilchberg and Nyon.

The Zurich porcelain with its rich variety of figures takes a privileged place: it perfectly blends with the interior of the Guildhall „Zur Meisen“ which has already in the 18th century occasionally served as exhibition place for selected pieces of this manufacture (as for example the service now on exhibit in the wing room, a gift presented in 1776 by the City of Zurich to the Monastery of Einsiedeln).

The exhibition of Zurich porcelain at the Guildhall „Zur Meisen“ represents a unique memorial of one of the most brilliant cultural epochs in the history of this town.