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## **The Rhine in the course of time –**

### **from the sources to the estuary**

#### **Landscape paintings of Johann Ludwig Bleuler and current photographs**

**18 April 2015 – 11 October 2015**

On display is almost the entire series of gouache paintings of the «Rhine Voyage» by Johann Ludwig (Louis) Bleuler (1792–1850). The 77 exhibited gouaches were created in around 1820. In a total of 80 sheets Bleuler and his students portrayed the river along its length of 1238.8 kilometres. From the sources of the Rhine at Lake Toma in Grisons via Chur, Vaduz, Constance, Schaffhausen, Basel, Strasbourg, Speyer, Mainz, Koblenz, Bonn, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Utrecht and Leiden to the estuary into the North Sea near Rotterdam, Johann Ludwig Bleuler has recorded the towns, the variety of landscapes and the standards of transport technology with meticulous attention to detail and great painterly sensitivity. He has succeeded therefore in creating a new genre in landscape art which exceeds the depiction of vedute solely as souvenirs. These gouaches have been provided by the Liechtenstein National Museum and originate from the collection of Adolf Peter Goop. He occupied himself throughout his lifetime with Johann Ludwig Bleuler's extraordinary quality gouaches.

For the first time it is possible to show more than 30 objects from the private property of Johann Ludwig Bleuler and his wife Antoinette. One of the highlights surely is the subscription book of the Rheinwerk, showing subscriptions of the crowned people of Austria, England, France, Prussia and Denmark as well as from the Russian Tsar. Even the ruby, a gift of Tsar Nicholas I to Louis Bleuler (1838), his secretary and everyday objects of his beloved wife Antoinette will be exhibited, which can be proven by the private letters on display. These objects are loans from the great-grandson and the great-great-granddaughter of Louis Bleuler.

Photographs of 42 places, which have especially been taken for the exhibition, will be on display. Current techniques like drones were used to take photos of the places of Bleuler's gouaches from around 1820 as seen today. The results are exceptional. One will be intrigued by the contrast.

#### **Gouache painting or gouache for short**

*Gouache* is the short term for gouache painting as well as for the pictures painted in that style.

Gouache paint is a water-soluble colourant made of coarsely grounded pigments with the addition of chalk. *Gum Arabic* is used as binding agent. Gouache paint can be used for opaque and glazing painting techniques.

It can be painted in thinner or thicker layers and even without grounding or glaze. White parts of a picture can be covered with colour unlike in watercolour painting where they have to be left blank. After drying, the surface of a gouache is velvety and matt. Good gouache paints do not dry lighter as long as they are artist's colours with non-fading pigments. As with all water-soluble paints, it

can be dissolved again after it has dried. Gouache paint is primarily used on materials like paper or cardboard, but can also be used on canvas and other textiles.

The first use of gouache-like paints is documented in early medieval illumination. In former times it was mostly used for scene painting and decorative painting. As late as the 15th century, the technique was used by renowned artists. *Raffaello*, *Tizian* and *Dürer* used gouache for studies and sketches, while other artists used it for grounding. *Henri Matisse* and *Marc Chagall* among others are famous exponents of modern gouache painting.

### **The *Rheinwerk* of Johann Ludwig Bleuler**

Hints on his occupation as an editor and his many journeys to almost all countries of Europe bear witness to the extensive activity of Louis Bleuler and the art publishers at Laufen Castle. On closer examination, the idea behind this most important publishing work of 19th century in Switzerland acquires a timeless exemplariness. In a total of 80 scenes, the course of the Rhine was portrayed from its sources to its mouth. These scenes were created till the 1840s. The gouaches showed vedutas that departed from the traditions of the lesser masters. Bleuler attempted to adapt the genre to the taste of the time. The exhibition shows 76 of these gouaches. Starting in February 1830, Johann Ludwig (Louis) Bleuler took orders of his major work *Voyage pittoresque aux bords du Rhin et de la Suisse (Rheinwerk)*. Already in 1817/18, on his journey to Grisons in the Rhine Valley, he produced the first studies for it. Johann Ludwig Bleuler therewith realised a project that had already been close to his father's heart.

Shortly afterwards in Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris he not only got to know topographic situations that could not be found in Switzerland. He most probably also took the opportunity to study landscape painting.

At that time clear tendencies existed concerning the choice of motifs of picturesque scenes of the Rhine. The regions of the *Middle Rhine* with its tors and castles fallen into ruins, that were perceived as being picturesque, matched this kind of taste. Travellers were able to use the illustrations to identify and remember places they had seen, but also they could show them as souvenirs to the people who had stayed at home. Louis Bleuler endeavoured to disengage himself from that kind of scheme and to offer an overall picture. His 80 scenes followed the Rhine from the source to the mouth. Thus, many motifs emerged that had gone unnoticed so far. However, Bleuler did not divide the 1238.8 kilometre-long course of the river into equal segments, but focused on special regions. Sheet 40 shows his home region. It shows the Rhine Falls beneath Laufen Castle. But from a geographic point of view, we have just reached the 275th kilometre of the Rhine. The rest of course was portrayed from the perspective of a Swiss artist searching for motifs outside his home country.

Bleuler's depictions always show people occupied with typical local activities. They chop wood, hunt, carry faggots, mow the meadow, tend livestock and draw water from a well. Sheet twelve in Splügen is the first to show architecture that is not totally rural. Up to the *North Sea* the course of the Rhine is always depicted in sunlight with only a few clouds in the sky. Louis Bleuler shows some incidents from different perspectives (e.g. Splügen.) He must have remodelled his scenes from the *Upper Rhine* at a later time because they show the shape of the Rhine after its regulation between 1840 and 1852. Along the *Middle Rhine*, Bleuler chose well-known places with tourist attractions.

The remainder of the Rhine up to its mouth in the *North Sea* is documented with large distances between each location. Some picturesque scenes of castles are followed by panoramas of the cities of Cologne and Emmerich. The mouths of the Rhine near Rotterdam and Katwijk appear to be stormy with high waves. In order to intensify the stormy impression he chose a dark sky for both depictions. All the other pictures show only a few clouds and always sun-drenched scenery.

The popular success of the works was due not least to the applied techniques used. The scenes were reproduced in detail using the aquatint etching technique. The prints were hand-coloured using opaque gouache paints. Thus, the pictures are reminiscent of paintings of the Old Masters. The artistic maturity and perfection evident in each scene is highly impressive. At the same time, the subsequent colouring of the pictures meant that they conformed to the prevailing style of the Biedermeier period. One has to be aware of the fact that the sketches made for many of the 80 scenes are unlikely to have been made only during good weather. But Bleuler's audience, coming from the wealthy urban upper class and the nobility, wanted to enjoy travel scenes set against an atmosphere of fair weather with sunny blue skies. This is in contrast to the romantic works of William Turner that were produced about 25 years earlier, which depict the forces of nature in all their diversity.

First and foremost Bleuler intended to create a beautiful picture book, a kind of neat traveller's souvenir for upper-class people, who in the 19th century were able to afford these journeys. It was not for nothing that the nobility of England, a country extremely keen on travelling, but also of the continent, e.g. the Emperor of Austria and Maria Isabella of Sicily, numbered among Bleuler's customers. The original subscription book of the *Rheinwerk*, which is displayed in the exhibition, shows that the royal families of England, France and Prussia as well as the Tsar of Russia were among his purchasers. Even today, 24 of the original 26 gouaches of the *Rheinwerk* that were ordered are still hanging on the walls of the private apartments of England's Queen *Elizabeth II* in *Windsor Castle*. With several series of publications, the businessman Louis Bleuler tried to distribute the scenes of the Rhine in book form. Starting in 1838, the work *Voyage pittoresque autour de la chute du Rhin* with the new aquatint depictions was published. The artwork masters were made between 1833 and 1835. The edition of the *Voyage pittoresque des bords du Rhin* with 27 steel engravings based on paintings by Bleuler and Federle was issued in 1850. It was annotated by Emil Zschokke and also included orientation sketches. It is regarded as the *little Rheinwerk*: a less comprehensive picture cycle in a smaller format than the big series. Thanks to Louis Bleuler's great-grandson and great-great-granddaughter some of its works are displayed in the exhibition.

The extraordinary high-quality gouaches of Johann Ludwig Bleuler were used as templates for big editions of prints portraying various scenes along the course of the Rhine.

### **The person Johann Ludwig Bleuler (1792–1850) and his art school**

Johann Ludwig Bleuler was born on 12 February 1792 in Feuerthalen. He is the second son child of the then-famous Swiss landscape painter Johann Heinrich Bleuler (1758–1823) and his wife Anna Bleuler-Toggenburger (c. 1765–1823). The exhibition includes their portraits, which were provided by the couple's great-grandson. Johann Heinrich Bleuler was a porcelain painter, sketcher of landscapes and painter using gouache technique, art teacher, art publisher and copperplate engraver. He founded the Bleuler art school, and he married Anna Toggenburger from Marthalen in

1786. The couple's first son was born in Zollikon. Bleuler was one of the politically involved inhabitants, and the strict government of Zurich forbade his art business. Presumably for political reasons, the family moved to Feuerthalen. The couple's fourth child was born at Laufen Castle. After their parents had died, the Bleulers welcomed two godchildren of Johann Heinrich Bleuler into their family and taught them painting.

Johann Ludwig Bleuler received an intensive technical and artistic training in his father's art publishers. After his father died in 1823, the two sons initially continued to run the art school in Heinrichsburg in Feuerthalen together. But different tempers and concepts of business led to conflicts and finally to the abandonment of their partnership. Heinrich remained active in his father's atelier.

Johann Ludwig Bleuler founded his own art publishers in Schaffhausen. The location was well-considered. Tourism was on the increase in Switzerland, and the Rhine Falls of Schaffhausen were a main attraction that, for the time, had good transport connections. With the slogan *Bergluft macht frei* (mountain air makes you free) a new romantic idea was born. But English poets like *Lord Byron* and *Percy Shelley* also contributed to spreading an image of Switzerland far beyond the borders of the country. The special feature of Switzerland, in comparison to Austria, was its role as a political and societal model in a post-revolutionary era.

Johann Ludwig Bleuler relocated his principal office from the town centre to Laufen Castle. Initially he leased the building at an exorbitant price. And when he bought the property in 1845 he also paid a high price, which caused financial problems. In about 1830 a manufactory and art school were established at Laufen Castle. Great Swiss artists like *Egidius Federle*, *Konrad Corradi*, *Johann Jakob Schmidt* and *Rudolf Weinmann* worked here temporarily. Bleuler installed an observation deck at Laufen Castle directly above the waterfalls. From there tourists could marvel – for a fee – at this miracle of nature. For a lending fee they could even borrow a raincoat to protect their clothes.

In about 1817/18 Bleuler visited Paris to pursue topographic studies. There he met Antoinette Trillié (1801–1873). She came from an influential and wealthy family. Her father died when she was still young. Her mother's second marriage was to Mr Thorel. Antoinette was 18 when she married Louis Bleuler, who was ten years older. In the winter of 1821 she travelled to Feuerthalen with several carts carrying her enormous dowry. The exhibition shows her suite, desk and perfume bottles. They were provided to us by the great-grandson and the great-great-granddaughter of the Bleulers. The couple's extensive correspondence, which can also be seen and read in the exhibition, proves that it was a love marriage. At that time this was not necessarily the rule.

From 1821 onwards Johann Ludwig Bleuler called himself Louis. His numerous study trips to Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Amsterdam, Paris and Stockholm made him an artist with urbane taste. However, as a serious businessman he was not averse to advertising his publishing house's products and to searching for customers.

Managing his atelier also demanded the ability of subtle leadership. Already at that time the artistic assistants employed were distinct individualists whose creativity only tolerate a limited degree of production pressure. Bleuler also showed organisational talent, negotiating skills and endurance. Rather unexpectedly, Bleuler turned out to be a pioneer of female emancipation. At his entrepreneurial peak he came down with a severe illness during his last stay abroad at the Tsar's court in 1837/38. For the first time, the exhibition shows one of the two rubies that were given to

Johann Ludwig Bleuler by Tsar Nicholas I, presumably in return for a picture of *Red Square*. Because of his disease, Bleuler was not able to travel any longer and at Laufen Castle he supervised the completion of his *Rheinwerk*. He assigned the arduous and dangerous sales trips to his competent wife Antoinette.

Antoinette also always was part of his creative process. This can be shown by a letter to her husband Louis dated 16 February 1838: *Concerning the four new scenes of the Rhine, I am totally dissatisfied. Everything is deficient – firstly the drawing. I also do not like the scene of Rüdesheim and Bingen. I expected better results from the sketch. The contrast is in the depth, and the hills do not look anything alike. I really have seen better scenes of that. Secondly, I have to say that the workmanship is poor. I was quite astonished and really got angry, because I had looked forward to it so much.*

Such comments were imperative in order to keep the domestic business running. Antoinette regularly sent newly produced works to places along the travel route arranged in advance. That way the businessman Bleuler was able to intervene relatively quickly. This was not the only indication of Louis and Antoinette Bleuler's modern management approach. Antoinette also travelled through Europe a lot more than her husband in order to establish new business relations and to organize the distribution of their portfolios.

In 1843, Louise Bleuler, the only child of Louis and Antoinette Bleuler, was born. At the time of the birth Antoinette was already 41 and Louis was 51. Even today they would be considered rather old to become parents at that time it was even more unusual. Antoinette Bleuler continued travelling even after the birth of her daughter.

As part of the political revolutions in the mid-19th century, Louis Bleuler got into financial troubles that brought him to the brink of ruin. Revolutions never had a positive influence on art, not to mention the trade in art. A glutted market and new reproduction techniques also contributed to the negative situation. Photography was also well on the way to becoming a new visual medium. The idea of portraying the entire Rhine was still great, and the results were convincing. But the prevailing taste was developing in another direction.

Louis Bleuler was only 58 years old when he died of his worsening disease on 28 March 1850. After his death, Antoinette Bleuler (1801–1873) was very successful in continuing the business. When Louis Bleuler died she had a pile of debts, but she was able to settle them before she died. In 1940, Bleuler's heirs sold Laufen Castle to the Canton of Zurich.

### **Photographs of the Rhine voyage**

Looking on the gouaches of Johann Ludwig (Louis) Bleuler one can discover a lot of things: a ruin here, an early steamboat there. Because his scenes represent places realistically, it is possible to determine exactly where he was at the time. This enabled the photographer Christoph Markwalder and his assistant Ms Moser to trace Louis Bleuler's Rhine voyage. They used modern resources, such as Google Maps and drones, but also traditional methods, like walking, as Louis Bleuler had done. This meant they managed to depict today's view of 42 of the places – sometimes with frightening or surprising developments. The glacier that has since Bleuler's day almost disappeared documents climate change. And the straightening of the Rhine has led to the altered landscape of today. The growth of many villages and cities is evident, but also the uncontrolled forest growth. Bleuler painted castles and mansions on top of rocks. Today they are totally surrounded by woods.

It is also surprising that some ruins of that time are shining in new splendour today. On the other hand, there are places that have hardly changed in nearly 200 years. The exhibition will display the results of today's Rhine voyage next to the gouaches, so that they can be compared directly.

### **The collector Adolf Peter Goop**

Adulf Peter Goop was a passionate collector. Over several decades he built up a collection of about 4000 works of art. It mainly consists of valuable paintings, drawings and graphic works dealing with Liechtenstein, the Rhine Valley and the artists living there. The collection also includes 2500 Easter eggs from all over the world. Internationally renowned are particularly the Easter eggs from tsarist Russia. It is considered to be the best collection of Russian Easter eggs outside of Russia. In 2010, Adulf Peter Goop gave his entire collection to Liechtenstein as a present, saying: *I owe so much to the country of Liechtenstein, my home country. With this donation I would like to return some of it!*

Adulf Peter Goop was born on 23 February 1921 in the small municipality of Schellenberg (Liechtenstein). He grew up in a poor, religious and rural family with many children. Adulf Peter Goop loved his home country and was interested in its customs. These close ties endured throughout his life. Later in his life he wrote several books and numerous articles about the customs and history of Liechtenstein.

After graduating from commercial school, Adulf Peter Goop joined the lawyer's office Dr. Ludwig Marxer in Vaduz. He worked his way up and became a legal counsel and trustee. In 1948, he mentored the Ukrainian artist Ivan Miassojedoff, who lived in Liechtenstein between 1938 and 1953 as Professor Eugen Zotow, as a legal counsel. The colourful artist studied painting among others things in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. After the Russian Revolution and many detours, he came to Berlin in the Golden 20s. Again after many detours, he came to Liechtenstein in 1938, using a fake Czech passport. There he went on producing his artworks, but also fake passports and banknotes, most probably because of financial problems. In 1947, his forgeries were uncovered, resulting in a trial in 1948. Adulf Peter Goop was his legal counsel during the trial. The artist Eugen Zotow introduced Goop into the world of art. Adulf Goop was on cordial terms with Zotow until the artist died in 1953. Henceforth he collected the artist's works and those of other Liechtenstein artists as well as scenes of Liechtenstein and the Rhine Valley. This is why Adulf Peter Goop developed a passion for the extraordinary quality of Johann Ludwig Bleuler's gouaches. His whole life he tried to acquire as many of the 80 known original gouaches as possible. By his death on 9 March 2011 he had succeeded in adding 77 of the 80 known gouaches to his collection. Up to now this collection in its entirety has only rarely been made accessible to the public.

### **The Rhine**

The river was called *Rhenos* by the Celts and *Rhenus* by the Romans. In ancient times it was called *Rhenus Pater* (Father Rhine).

From its source to its mouth the Rhine passes through six states: Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Germany, France and the Netherlands. Its total length is 1238.8 kilometres. Among its tributaries are the *Aar river*, the *Main*, the *Neckar* and the *Moselle*. The Rhine is one of the busiest waterways in the world.

Of its total length, 883 kilometres are navigable for larger ships. The course of the Rhine is subdivided into segments: the *headwaters and sources*, the *Alpine Rhine*, the *Obersee (Lake Constance)*, the *Seerhein*, the *Untersee (Lake Constance)*, the *High Rhine*, the *Upper Rhine*, the *Middle Rhine*, the *Lower Rhine* and the *Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt-Delta*.

Traditionally, the small *Lake Toma* below *Saint-Gotthard* is considered to be the source of the Rhine. This is where the *Vorderrhein* has its source. But the longest headwater stream is the *Rein da Medel* in eastern Switzerland. The *Hinterrhein* is another headwater stream. Near Tamins in Switzerland, the *Vorderrhein* and the *Hinterrhein* join to form the *Alpine Rhine*. After 200 kilometres, this river flows into *Lake Constance*, which is the third biggest inland lake in Central Europe. *Obersee* (upper lake) and *Untersee* (lower lake) of *Lake Constance* are connected by the *Seerhein*. The beginning of the kilometrage of the Rhine is exactly in the middle of the old bridge of Constance that spans the river. The water of the *Alpine Rhine* flows quickly and it is clean and cold. This segment is not used for shipping.

The segment from *Lake Constance* to Basle in Switzerland is called the *High Rhine*. Near Schaffhausen there is one of the biggest waterfalls in Europe. It is 23 metres high, 150 metres broad, and 700 cubic metres of water per second flow over it. The water of the *High Rhine* is clean and with a high oxygen content. In parts, the *High Rhine* is in its natural state.

The *Upper Rhine* is the "multicultural" segment of the river. From Basle to Bingen it passes through Switzerland, France and Germany. In the 18th century the *High Rhine* consisted of a branched net of small rivers. Shipping was impossible. The straightening of the *Upper Rhine* with a new riverbed and a defined course started in 1817. Barrages with locks were added, and much of the land adjoining the river changed from pastureland to arable land. One odd feature of the *Upper Rhine* today is its gold panning. Gold has been produced in Baden's *Upper Rhine* region for 2000 years. Although the deposit is rather small, gold panning developed into a tourist magnet. There are gold panning classes and jewellers sell Rhine gold. From Basle onwards there are ships that go downstream. Because of the increased nutrient content, the biodiversity within the river increases. Between Bingen and Bonn the *Upper Rhine* becomes the *Middle Rhine*. The famous Lorelei rock is close to St. Goarshausen. It soars above the water for 130 metres and is part of the Lorelei legend. According to the legend, the siren *Lorelei's* singing is said to have driven boatmen to their deaths. As a matter of fact, it is at this place that shipmasters have to pass the narrowest and deepest part of the river. The *Middle Rhine* is famous for its wine-producing regions and the medieval castles and mansions. The world's highest cold-water geyser is active near Andernach. It shoots water up to 60 metres into the air.

The *Lower Rhine* from Bonn to the border of the Netherlands is generally built up on both sides. The biggest city along the river is Cologne and the biggest inland harbour in Europe – Duisburg – is also located on the *Lower Rhine*. The water flows very slowly and its turbidity increases. Because of the densely built-up area, the industry and the shipping, the water temperature rises and the oxygen content decreases.

The *Delta Rhine* begins at the border of the Netherlands. The river enters the *North Sea* at several places, and its major distributary is near Rotterdam. The port of Rotterdam is built to a great extent below sea level. That is why the city has to be protected from floods by a complicated system of floodgates. As with most rivers, the water quality in the delta is the worst. In Rotterdam, saltwater and freshwater are intermixing. The mixture is called *brackish water*.

## Shipping on the Rhine

Shipping on the Rhine and its tributaries has a long tradition, because already before the modern era many important economic and industrial regions of Europe were connected by the river system and were located on the banks. Today the Rhine is one of the busiest waterways in the world.

After the Congress of Vienna, the *Rhine Navigation Act* came into force (31 March 1831). Until today, it guarantees free shipping on the Rhine up to open sea. It also scrapped the staple right of Cologne and Mainz and obliged the riparian states to remove all navigation hazards. The straightening of the *Upper Rhine* began in 1817 so that navigation became easier.

The *Revised Rhine Navigation Act* of 17 October 1868 (*Mannheim Act*) comprises regulations concerning shipping on the Rhine that are mostly still valid today. Shipping on the river was exempted from charges and tariffs. *Rhine waterway courts* were established. Switzerland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium are represented in the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine.

Today, the Rhine can be navigable from its mouth to the port of Rheinfelden without any problems throughout the year. This is possible because of the developed fairway and the constant precipitation during all seasons in its basin.

## Fish species in the Rhine

Today the Rhine is once again the habitat of 63 species of fish, e.g. *common roach*, *northern pike*, *wels catfish*, *grayling*, *barbel*, *eel* and *perch*. All of them are edible. Only the *sturgeon* cannot be found any more. Fish ladders and weirs have been built, so that migrating fish are again able to move to the *Upper Rhine* and its tributaries in order to spawn. The biodiversity of *mussels*, *snails* and *insects* has also increased. Some of them are newly arrived immigrants. In 2000, the number of small animals was nearly as high as 100 years ago.

## Rhine romanticism and Rhine folklore

Knights, dragons, lonely virgins on high rocks (*Lorelei*), hardworking dwarfs and the *Heinzelmännchen* – all of these are part of Rhine folklore. One of the most popular tales is the *Nibelungenlied*. Songs, castles and mansions also belong to this kind of Rhine romanticism. *Heinrich Heine's* song *Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten* is one of the most famous songs of the Rhine. Because of its importance in comparison to other German rivers, the Rhine is lyrically and tenderly called *Vater Rhein* (*Father Rhine*).

## Facts & figures

Opening hours.

Museum, shop and restaurant

from 10.00 until 18.00 daily

The Swiss Museums Pass and the Museums-PASS-Musées are valid for the Toy Worlds Museum Basle.



Admission.

CHF 7.00/5.00

Children up to 16 years of age are admitted free of charge and only the company of adults.

No additional charge for the special exhibition.

The entire building is wheelchair-accessible.

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