

The Doll's House Museum Basel presents:

“The Amber Room in Miniature”

A treasure of cultural interest made to the scale of 1:12

from 23rd October 2005 to 17th April 2006.

History

The legendary amber room was a present given by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm I to the Russian Czar Peter I in the year 1716. In accordance with diplomatic etiquette, it was usual for monarchs to exchange representative presents at the end of a visit. The Prussian King felt compelled to give the Czar a valuable gift at the end of his unexpected visit. He had the idea to give away the unfinished and disliked amber closet. It was traditional for the Prussian monarchy to give gifts made from amber. The King was said to be mean and he convinced himself that, as the completion of the amber closet would in any way be very expensive, it would be an ideal present.

This amber closet had been commissioned by his father King Friedrich I. It consisted of wooden panels decorated with artistically worked amber, which is the term given to resin which has aged over millions of years. However, Friedrich I did not live to see the completion of this unique treasure. His son Friedrich Wilhelm I, who was not so generous too, did not have the work of art completed, as he felt it was a waste of money.

Czar Peter I had the amber closet installed in his winter palace in St. Petersburg. As the room was larger than the closet and some of the pieces were missing, he commissioned mirror columns with carved golden frames and ornate rococo decorations to be interspersed between the amber panels.

Towards the end of the Second World War the amber room, which had been moved in 1941 to Königsberg (Kaliningrad) for safety, was dismantled by the German troops, packed in crates and taken away. It was said that they wanted to protect it from the advancing allied forces. Around 1945 it disappeared altogether under very strange circumstances. There are numerous theories, myths and legends as to the fate and whereabouts of the original amber room.

Reconstruction

In 1979 the Council of Ministers of the former Russian Federation decided to recommission the amber room, although several experts were of the opinion that it would be impossible to reproduce the amber panels. The craftsmen only had black and white photographs and descriptions to copy. The reconstruction of one of the greatest cultural treasures in history was completed after more than twenty years of meticulous work. The amber room is again on display to the public since 31st May, 2003 in the Catherine's Palace in Zarskoje Selo, the Czar's village near St. Petersburg.

The Miniature constructed by Uwe Habermann

Uwe Habermann, a 40-year old carpenter from the North Friesian island of Föhr, visited St. Petersburg in 1993 and had the idea of reconstructing the legendary Catherine Palace amber room in miniature on a scale of 1:12. He had experience in building miniatures, as he had already built a doll's house for his girlfriend and later a multistory doll's house.

The project proved to be extremely difficult, as only one colour photograph existed of the original. Habermann also had to become accustomed to working with the naturally honey-coloured Baltic amber, which he obtained from the firm Bernstein Manufaktur GmbH in Stuttgart, who was also able to give him advice about working with its amber. As the reconstruction progressed in St. Petersburg, illustrations of the flooring of the amber room became available. In the year 2000 Uwe Habermann was able to obtain more meaningful pictures. Over a period of 10 years he worked in his cellar on about 4 ½ kilos of amber, of which about one third landed in the bin as dust. He worked patiently and meticulously on the precious material with dental tools. One of the most delicate parts was the 2.6 cm high amber plinth, on which were displayed in several places, the insignias of the Prussian king including the Prussian eagle.

Uwe Habermann's impressive wall panels are excellent examples of amber craftsmanship. The wonderful wooden intarsian flooring, which took one whole year to complete, is also perfect. The sixteen candelabra, each with three arms, bathe the ostentatious room in the characteristic amber colour. The four Florentine mosaics, which represent the five senses, were originally made with different sorts of marble and gemstones. In Habermann's model these mosaics as well as the ceiling frescoes are represented by colour pictures.

The miniature was completed in May 2003 at the same time as the amber room in St. Petersburg. Its final measurements are 750 mm x 350 mm x 450 mm.

A Cultural Treasure to the scale of 1:12 in Basel

The Doll's House Museum in Basel is happy to have the opportunity to display Uwe Habermann's unique miniature of the famous amber room to the public as from 23rd October, 2005.

Opening Hours

Museum, Shop and Café: Daily from 10 am. to 6 pm.

Entrance

CHF 7.–/CHF 5.–

Children up to 16 years are admitted free of charge, and only if accompanied by an adult.

There is no additional entrance fee for this special exhibition.
The whole building is accessible to wheelchairs.

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