SCHAULAGER®

SCHAULAGER PRESENTS AT HAUS ZUM KIRSCHGARTEN

FRANCIS ALŸS: FABIOLA

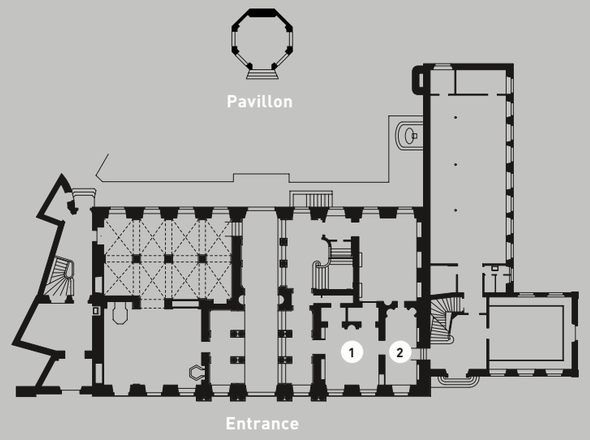
12 MARCH – 28 AUGUST 2011

A TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION AT HAUS ZUM KIRSCHGARTEN

Schaulager is currently a guest at Haus zum Kirschgarten with an exhibition in which the Belgian artist Francis Alÿs presents his collection of portraits of Saint Fabiola. Born in Antwerp in 1959, Alÿs has lived in Mexico City since 1986. For 20 years he has been accumulating objects with the same motif: a young woman shown in profile wearing a crimson penitential robe. Painted, embroidered or collaged by Sunday artists and amateurs, they are largely derived from a painting which has long since vanished. **The original image of Fabiola, which inspired the many copies, was painted in 1885 by the French realist Jean-Jacques Henner (1829–1905).** The many subsequent versions vary in size and medium, sometimes in their use of colour and the orientation of the motif. Using this curious, monographic collection, Francis Alÿs pursues his interest in the creative and aesthetic potential held by artistic means of production, and in the structure and role of the art market. In so doing he blurs the distinctions and hierarchies between original and copy, between anonymous craftsperson and famous artist, between the kitsch and the highly-prized.

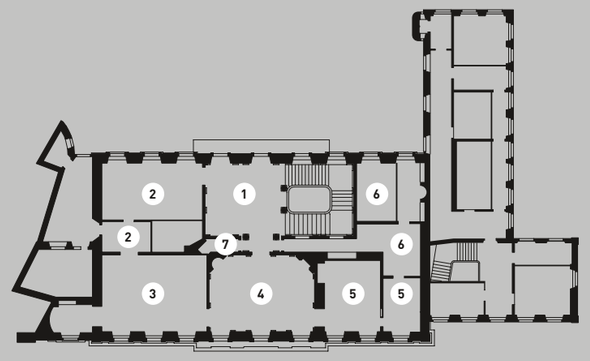
Alÿs acquires these amateur copies at flea markets and in junk or antique shops throughout Europe and Latin America. **At Haus zum Kirschgarten he has added his collection of over 370 images into the permanent collection housed in this imposing town house.** With its neoclassical architecture and museum-style installation of bourgeois protestant domestic artefacts, as well as special collections from the 18th and 19th centuries, it provides an auspicious point of departure for Alÿs' intervention. The copies, mostly from the first half of the twentieth century, given their origins, would never have achieved museum-exhibit status. Only through their connection with the contemporary artist Francis Alÿs have they been smuggled like cuckoo's eggs into the hallowed halls of the museum.

Now the Fabiola portraits have been interwoven with the museum-style construction of a historical domesticity. On the one side, the Fabiolas react as hidden jewels, a clear echo or a subtle parody of the 18th- and 19th-century exhibits and their presentation in Haus zum Kirschgarten; as usurpers, on the other hand, invading 'en masse', they form the basis for a stimulating dialogue.



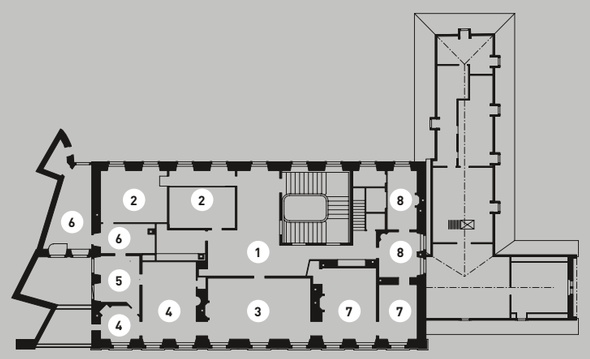
GROUND FLOOR

1 Pay-desk
2 Cloackroom



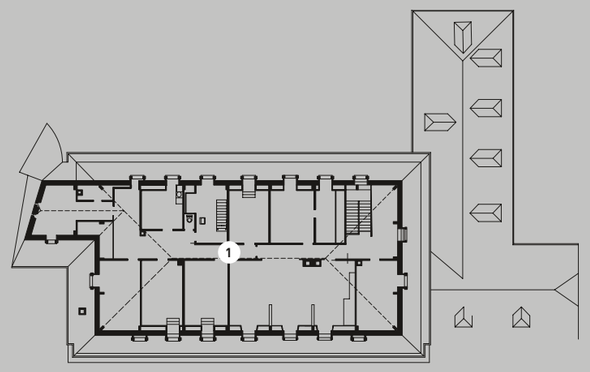
FIRST FLOOR

1 Vestibule
2 Room with an Alcove and Anteroom
3 Large Room with Tapestries
4 Blue Drawing Room
5 Louis XV Drawing Room and Louis XV Room
6 Anteroom, Corridor with Cupboards and Kammerei Room
7 Cleaning Room



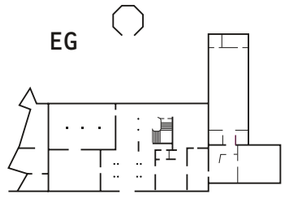
SECOND FLOOR

1 Summer House
2 Visitor's Parlour and Dining Room
3 Grey Room
4 Burckhardt's Bedroom and the Rose Boudoir
5 Lichthof Room
6 Kitchen Anteroom and Kitchen
7 Room with Green Panelling and Corner Room
8 Miniatures Room and Neustück Room



THIRD FLOOR

1 Toys and dolls'houses

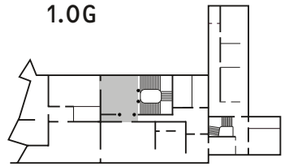


GROUND FLOOR – THE HISTORY OF HAUS ZUM KIRSCHGARTEN

Haus zum Kirschgarten was commissioned by the silk ribbon manufacturer **Johann Rudolf Burckhardt** (1750–1813) and was regarded as a highly luxurious town house by contemporary Basel standards. **Serving both as his home and as the headquarters of his business, it is evidence indeed of the 25-year-old art lover's desire for prestige. It was designed between 1775 and 1780 by the architect, master mason and draughtsman Johann Ulrich Büchel (1753–1792) in the early neoclassical style.** By the 1790s however, Burckhardt, already divorced and remarried, had left the city of Basel. Loyal to the 'ancien régime' he sought refuge from current political developments – first moving to the countryside, then finally emigrating. After this the property, seen as excessively showy by Basel's upper-classes, changed hands frequently. In 1917, it finally became state property, used as a post office and as military administration.

In 1951, Haus zum Kirschgarten was established as a museum of domestic life. The volatile history of the house and its inhabitants meant that only a fraction of the original inventory remained; Burckhardt's valuable art collection is gone, as well as his plaster casts of antique statues and only a remnant of the rooms' original furnishings remained. The museum decided to supplement its fragmentary holdings with furnishings and objects from upper-class Basel houses of the time, which had been demolished. In this way, a collection was gradually built up and installed so as to create a tour: a definitive representation of the 18th- and 19th-century zeitgeist, according to the museum's taste of the 1950s. All other rooms in the house were used to present precious specialist collections – porcelain, faïence, watches, clocks and toys. This arrangement of the ensemble has largely been preserved.

Visitors enter Haus zum Kirschgarten through the imposing gate which once connected the courtyard entrance to the original utility rooms and the company's management offices on the ground floor. In the entrance, the first few portraits from Francis Alÿs' Fabiola collection are waiting to greet visitors. **'Francis Alÿs: Fabiola' responds playfully to various aspects of collecting and presentation, to their respective historical and historicising structures.**



FIRST FLOOR – ROOMS FOR ENTERTAINING VESTIBULE – LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The broad three-tier stone staircase leads to the vestibule, the expansive entrance hall of the 'bel étage', whose prestigious salons were traditionally used for receiving guests. Amongst the rigorous early classical forms decorating the walls and the marble floors and wrought iron banisters, all part of the original interior fittings,
a dense group of Fabiola portraits has been placed. **In the context of this 'haut-bourgeois' protestant house, Fabiola's saintly legend generates a disturbing resonance.** The original

myth, describing a fourth-century patrician Roman woman converted to Christianity, comes from the hand of the Church Father Hieronymus. The legend describes how, following a divorce which contravened the church's laws, and a subsequent remarriage, Fabiola was welcomed back into the bosom of her Christian congregation having done public penance. Eventually she was sainted for her devotion to the faith and her self-sacrificing life, dedicated to caring for the sick.

Francis Alÿs' opening salvo in the vestibule could not have marked a more central point in the museum tour. Two squadrons of Fabiolas have replaced Anton Graff's 1786 gold-framed oil painting of Johann Rudolf Burckhardt, who commissioned the house, along with Karl Anton Hickel's 1781 portrait of Burckhardt's uncle, Johann Jakob Thurneysen-Schweighauser. A mass of anonymous images of the saint, mostly unframed, have taken the important place reserved for the master and his ancestors: an impressive gesture marking the occupation of Haus zum Kirschgarten and the act of writing new stories into its historicising narrative.

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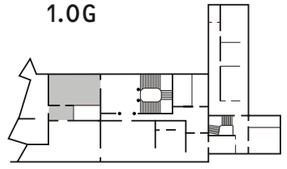

ROOM WITH AND ALCOVE AND ANTEROOM – PORTRAITS OF SAINT FABIOLA AMONG PORTRAITS OF THE UPPER-CLASSES

After the tumultuous appearance in the vestibule, in the adjoining alcove room modest pairs of pictures showing the Roman saint are fitted into the existing decoration. Alongside the carved oak alcove (ca. 1750) and a toilet cabinet in the Louis XV style, the chamber holds a large baroque cupboard (1710–1720). **On either side of this imposing piece hang portraits of the upper-classes 'à la mode française', which, in the art-historical tradition of the individual portrait, express both a physiognomic likeness as well as an image of the person's character and her social position.** This principle is also followed by the marriage portraits of the Hoffmann family in the anteroom (ca. 1711), where Fabiola twice takes the place allotted to the wife. In the bourgeois gallery of ancestors the Fabiolas are conspicuous as foreign bodies. With their repeated motif and their function as images of a saint they initially seem more closely related to the tradition of the icon, which is bound to a fixed canon of representation. As mediator between life and afterlife, an icon conforms to a schematic original; each copy, made as exactly as possible, mostly by anonymous artists, passes its sanctity on.

The Fabiolas exhibited here, however, are derived from a very earthly original, Jean-Jacques Henner's 1885 painting. **Henner painted it as a commission for the American collector Mary J. Morgan in the style of his time, using a female model made of flesh and blood.** The work was shown in the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris but after this all trace of it was lost. Its subsequent triumph, demonstrated by Francis Alÿs, was based entirely on a photographic reproduction of it. It can be assumed that the inspiration for Henner's 1854 depiction of Fabiola was the novel 'Fabiola, or the Church of the Catacombs' by the English cleric, Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman. Forgotten for years, Saint Fabiola, patron saint of nurses and of divorced and mistreated women, first gained her astonishing popularity on the basis of this literary representation.

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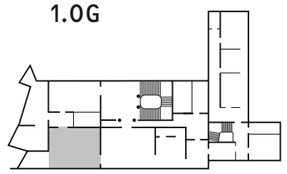

LARGE ROOM WITH TAPESTRIES – ART, CRAFT AND EXPERTISE

The many and the one: the collection of Fabiolas swings between these twin poles. While the requirement for the individual to remain identifiable within the masses has largely been sidelined, unique qualities suddenly become conspicuous when our attention is focussed on an isolated object. Painting styles and technique used for each single Fabiola reveal individual authorships which become all the more telling as the majority of the images are clearly the work of amateurs. **However, the lack of expertise generously provides space for an equally fascinating originality, making the Fabiolas into exciting artefacts and at the same time 'agents provocateurs' in the sphere of refined applied-art objects.** The fact that a historical museum is characterised less by its exhibition of unique contemporary incunabula and more by its presentation of objects with historical relevance, makes the paradoxical multiplication of a portrait which relies on individuality all the more conspicuous.

One of the Fabiolas placed in this room is a precisely embroidered image of the face we have now become familiar with. The medieval expression tapestry, meaning the weaving of images and motifs into a textile surface, refers here not only to the technique used to produce each individual image, but also to the design of the entire room, which is fitted out with large-scale tapestries showing scenes from country life. **The tapestries at Haus zum Kirschgarten were created in 1770 in Aubusson, an important tapestry centre in France at the time.** The finely crafted pieces of furniture and objects placed in the room complete the interior, which evokes a sense of homeliness and good company enjoyed in a luxurious atmosphere. Francis Alÿs' derivative, amateur mongrel, imitating the rich tradition of applied arts so expertly, has slipped in furtively like an outsider enjoying the refined surroundings.

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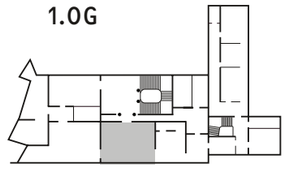
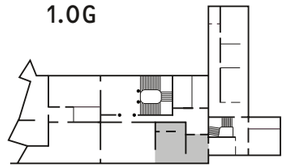


BLUE DRAWING ROOM – A BIG IMPRESSION IN THE 'GRANDE SALLE'

Unlike the previous, minimal intervention, the image of Fabiola is spread copiously throughout the Blue Drawing Room. **The Fabiolas pull out all the stops and use their combined strength in a tight, multiple three-part unit, in which multiplicity is emphasised, and the uniformity of the collective mass, rather than the individual image.** In this accretion, the markers of individual character and physiognomy retreat in favour of similarities, the heads, all facing in the same direction, the red fabric of the veil. Only one isolated Fabiola stems the tide by facing the other way and wearing a green scarf. The formal, ceremonial nature of this saturated assault is further emphasised by the fact that it is taking place in the most important room of Haus zum Kirschgarten.

The Blue Drawing Room, or 'grande salle', as it is called in the architect's plans, was the location for official receptions during the heyday of family life in the house. Burckhardt's craving for recognition is reflected in the deployment of classical columns; they ascend in sequence, from the Tuscan order in the entrance hall and the Ionic in the Vestibule, reaching

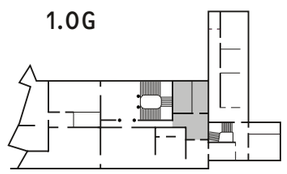
their pinnacle with the Corinthian pilasters here. The room still retains the rigorous decorative scheme installed on its walls when it was built, consisting solely of architectural elements. **The house was designed at a time when the overwhelming significance to the public good of wholesale commerce was just being recognised, elevating it from the private to the public sphere.** This involved an ennobling of the entire class of wholesale merchants – the 'commerçants' as opposed to the 'negoçiants', the small businessmen – and meant that the talk was no longer of 'noblesse commerçante' but of 'commerçe ennobli'. This elevation in status brought with it the right to allow private buildings to express the same sense of societal power which the established canon had previously reserved for public edifices – because in these new buildings important personal business was being done which would have a direct influence on public life.



LOUIS XV DRAWING ROOM AND SMALL LOUIS XV ROOM – THE ARTIST AS COLLECTOR

A few years after settling in Mexico City, giving up his career as an architect, Francis Alÿs decided to begin collecting art. **As a young artist with limited financial means, he found himself fascinated by the diverse techniques used in applied arts. He therefore began a collection of 'handmade' copies of the masterpieces of Western art, which he sought in flea markets, junk and antique shops.** He soon found out that instead of world-famous paintings such as Raphael's 'Sistine Madonna' and Leonardo's 'Last Supper', the copiers seemed to prefer other works. He continually came across portraits of the same young woman, who he soon identified as Saint Fabiola.

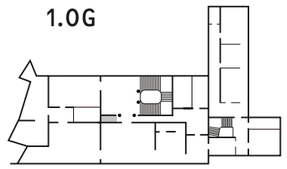
Most of his early purchases were found by chance on the extensive walks he took in Maastricht, Mexico City or elsewhere. More recently, friends and others aware of the project have also added their finds to the growing collection. **Something which began as a modest, almost casual search, has developed astonishingly.** Entirely different from a private collection, which is orientated towards domestic enjoyment, Francis Alÿs' project is continually on the move and remains open ended.



ANTEROOM, CORRIDOR WITH CUPBOARDS AND KAMMEREI ROOM – PREVIOUS SITES OF THE FABIOLA EXHIBITION

Since 1994, Francis Alÿs has shown the ever-increasing collection several times. In choosing a location he avoids either institutions with neutral, white exhibition spaces or industrial buildings converted into galleries, both of which would focus our attention directly onto the assembled Fabiolas. **Right from the start, Alÿs used his collection to investigate the specifics of a site, with its own dynamic of interdependent reactions to a situation, and has sought active participation in pre-existing circumstances.** At each of the previous sites, the Fabiola collection was presented using Hermitage-style hanging; in other words the images were lined up close together with hardly a gap between them. Each time they were integrated into surroundings with a clearly determined function, an elegant history and a clearly discernable individual dynamic, shaped in various ways by the institution of the museum: in the collections of the Hispanic Society in New York, devoted to the art and culture of Spain, Portugal and Latin America, between the old masters at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, in the context of the venerable portraits at the National Portrait Gallery in London and most recently in the vaults of the Benedictine monastery of Santo Domingo, near Madrid. Now, in Basel, the arrangement of the Fabiola images involves not only 'gathering' but also 'isolation', making a visit to the exhibition into a treasure hunt as we seek out hidden portraits.

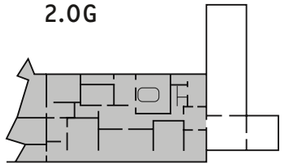
Since the 1960s, criticism of the museum as an institution has become a strategy used by many artists. Such interventions question the institution's position of power and the catalogue of ideological and disciplinary regulations which characterise the museum establishment. **Francis Alÿs's Fabiola collection stands in this tradition. And its embedding in Haus zum Kirschgarten evokes a sense of subversion, but it does not reverse the old order or storm the palace.** It does not seek to refute but to question, and even to attune itself to the chords struck by the museum. The Fabiola portraits, arranged in the two vitrines in the Kammerei room, act as if they were part of a scientific presentation. At the same time, they boost the celebratory atmosphere created by the costly, ornately-laid table behind the glass.



THE CLEANING ROOM – A VIEW BEHIND THE SCENES

As in other upper-class houses, Haus zum Kirschgarten also has servants' passages, back stairs and corridors running behind and between the main rooms, along which the staff circulated while the family members and their guests remained in the official quarters. **Alongside these magnificent rooms, designed for self-aggrandizement and to impress, there was thus a parallel world with a system of routes serving the needs of the masters and the maintenance of the building.** With the division and regulation of the domestic pathways into exclusive territories of authority and zones of subservience, architecture became an expression of social hierarchy and the class system.

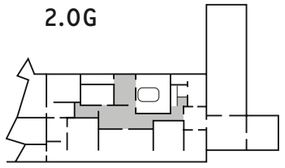
Today, these servants' passages have been opened up and are part of the area accessible to visitors. **With his Fabiola collection, Francis Alÿs pushes further into the realm of today's museum, opening doors which are normally closed to the average visitor.** And much like it might have been two hundred years ago, we are offered a view into a wholly different world, but a world which is also part of everyday museum life: the cleaners' room, with a wash basin and cleaning things, giving a small but revealing insight into the world of Haus zum Kirschgarten's technical functioning. Alongside this, a minimal disruption – the opened door – demonstrates how the carefully arranged, apparently authentic decor can be made to appear staged simply by pushing open a concealed door.



SECOND FLOOR – ROOMS FOR PRIVATE LIFE

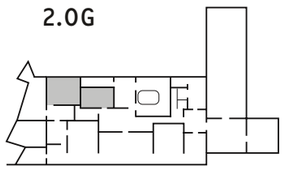
Passing up to the second floor, the imposing marble staircase gives way to less imposing wooden steps, an indication that the upper rooms were used by the master and his family for private living. These rooms were only occasionally or partially seen by visitors.

At first glance, Francis Alÿs' interventions seem to be organised in a similar way to the floors beneath. **Here too there are expansive groups of Fabiola portraits. Alongside this there are also the well-disguised insertions, which we only discover at second glance, and the obvious exchanges, in which the pre-existing structure is undermined.** Alÿs creates conditions which make the circumstances of social convention visible in an almost casual, ironic way. In his choice of Fabiola images the house's long-gone domestic life is recalled and revived.



SUMMER HOUSE – FAMILY LIFE AT HAUS ZUM KIRSCHGARTEN

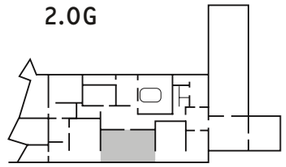
Alÿs has hung this anteroom with a dense, visually loud population of Fabiola portraits. Such antechambers were known as Summer Houses in Basel because they remained pleasantly cool in summer. The Summer House feels like a passage or connecting space between the staircase and the adjoining living spaces. For precisely this reason the family was able to use it as a protected playroom with fresh air, where the children could amuse themselves with board games or dolls houses. As the large 'positive organ' placed against the wall suggests, the room was presumably also used for devotional gatherings. **It is possible that the Summer House was the only place in the building where the family, adults and children, could meet in an unconstrained atmosphere and relax together.** It was, in a sense, the social interaction space for the entire family.



VISITORS' PARLOUR AND DINING ROOM – MIMICRY AND CONTEMPORARY TASTE

Directly opposite the staircase is the way into the Visitors' Parlour and the Dining Room beyond it, which was taken from Segerhof, a house on Blumenrain which was demolished in 1935, a typically imposing but simple merchant's house from the end of the 18th century. **In the expensively panelled dining room, Francis Alÿs has carried out an exchange of images:** on either side of a Schaffhausen pendulum clock, where otherwise both halves of a marriage portrait of the Basel draughtsman and engraver Christian von Mechel and his wife, Elisabeth von Mechel-Haas, would hang. Mechel was a key cultural figure for Johann Burckhardt, who commissioned the house; he introduced him to Goethe and to the architect Johann Ulrich Büchel, who designed Haus zum Kirschgarten in the antique-moderne taste, a style new at the time.

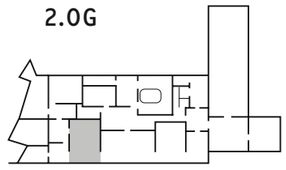
With a small intervention, Alÿs gives us the impulse needed to perceive the complexity of a compound of diverse historical tendencies and changing material circumstances. **On the one hand, we have the tastes of the 18th century within which many diverse things might easily fit together. On the other hand, this is superimposed by the 1950's concept of museum display, which attempts to maintain an average sense of this zeitgeist by assembling interiors and objects.** And then we have the people of today, who, in the process of familiarising themselves with that which has become unfamiliar, have the chance to reflect on their own position within their time.



GREY ROOM – CLASSICAL EDUCATIONAL CULTURE

Named after the grey, marbled wallpaper taken from the eponymous room at Segerhof (demolished 1935), the Grey Room is typical of the tasteful, refined style in which the Basel bourgeoisie lived in the 18th century. **It was here that the adult members of the family gathered to socialise in the evenings.** They played music, read literature, recited poems and no doubt discussed anecdotes from their travels or the small-scale artworks displayed in vitrines for all to see.

A subtly-placed Fabiola portrait in a cabinet (ca. 1800) left of the entrance to the room provides a snapshot of the presumptions of the educated upper-classes and at the same time allows us to see behind their ideological facades. The small painting replaces the image of an old man at a dinner table. It is surrounded by terracotta figures representing the holy family, Venus after her bath and Ganymede with the eagle. An exchange of gender and an occupation by, of all people, the patron saint of unhappy women, invites us to try viewing things from a perspective which differs from the norm.

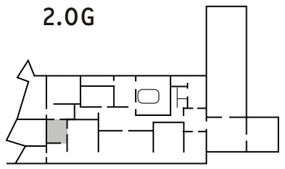


BURCKHARDT'S BEDROOM AND THE ROSE BOUDOIR – THE WIFE'S WORLD AND THE ANCESTORS' GALLERY

In the rooms leading off to the right, Anna Maria Burckardt's bedroom and the Rose Boudoir, still in its original state, Francis Alÿs takes a somewhat different strategy. The Fabiola portraits chosen do not seek open confrontation, instead staging moments of great effect through calm, patient disguise. The Fabiola in the bedroom wears a soft green veil; the one in the Rose Boudoir is a similar cream colour to the painted walls. **The bedroom was reserved for the mistress of the house; today the Rose Boudoir is arranged as a study.**

As an educated, patrician Roman, the historical Fabiola was in correspondence with Saint Hieronymus and he informed her on theological matters. Two letters from the church father himself addressed 'ad Fabiolam' still exist. **The intervention in the bedroom also plays on the current use of this room. Today, countless objects relating to the family of the house's founder have been collected.** The family's most exceptional figure was Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, who can be seen in a large portrait on the left-hand wall. Known as

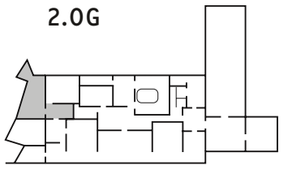
'Sheikh Ibrahim', he carried out research in Syria, Egypt and Nubia on behalf of the African Society of London. Through his travel writings, he became the first European to draw attention to the Temple of Abu Simbel and the Jordanian city of rocks, Petra.



LICHTHOF ROOM – FABIOLA AS MEMORIAL

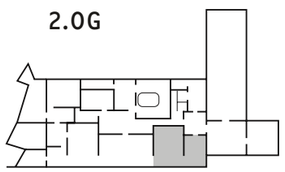
In the Lichthof room, which contains objects and furnishings belonging to various wealthy Basel families, Francis Alÿs has placed a small Fabiola highly inconspicuously in a window niche. She takes the place of the wife of the town-house-dweller Johann Caspar Brand (1750–1795) whose portrait appears on the wall of the niche opposite, the other half of a two-part marriage portrait dated 1788.

Like an echo, Alÿs' intervention intensifies the original function of this type of image, which is not ascribed to the category of high art but was used for private purposes. **Such images were there to provide a daily reminder of mutual belonging, even after death**; it was normal for those left behind to write dedications on the reverse, for instance in the case of Johann Brand 'to my loving, godly father'. In this way, the parents depicted were kept alive in their children's memory. By replacing the female half of the two-part portrait, Alÿs allows his Fabiola project to participate in an upper-class, family tradition which serves to honour the memory of the dead.



KITCHEN ANTEROOM AND KITCHEN – NEW ORDERS

In the Anteroom to the Kitchen and in the Kitchen itself, which was originally on the ground floor and much larger than this room, Francis Alÿs has placed various Fabiolas, inconspicuously and deliberately, in order to mess up the tidy organisation. One Fabiola demands a place amongst the men-folk. She is literally wedged between the image of Jeremias Wildt-Socin at the homely fireplace and a self-portrait by Daniel Burckhardt-Wildt, brought here from Württemberger-hof. Whether these Basel family patriarchs have been disturbed by this cheeky interruption to their established comfort or are enjoying the visit of this unexpected guest, remains unknown. Both outcomes are possible, given that Basel's upper-classes were by turns both conservative and open-minded.

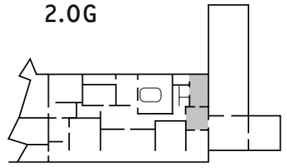


ROOM WITH THE GREEN PANELLING AND CORNER ROOM – POPULAR LITERARY FIGURES

The green-panelled room is one of Haus zum Kirschgarten's rooms which has retained its original decoration (ca. 1780) and was used as the master's bedroom. Its walls are adorned with decorative paintwork which appears sculptural and shows figures from classical mythology, corresponding to the Burckhardt's major interest in the art of antiquity.

The corner room, with its oval window through which one could observe events on Elisabethenstrasse below, was fully renewed in 1986. The wallpaper was recreated according to designs from around 1800 in Rixheim, Alsace. **Various portraits of Basel personalities and aristocrats with links to the city are hung here.** They include an 1814 portrait of Johann Peter Hebel from the Baden county, replaced with an image of Fabiola. Hebel was a dialect poet still admired today in Basel. His most appreciated work is still his 1806 text set to the tune of the Basel city anthem: 'Z' Basel an mym Rhy'.

Hebel's local popularity and his decision to write in dialect is reminiscent of Fabiola's popularity, whose image was once academic, but who found her astonishing fame in the field of Sunday painters and amateur artists. Much as Hebel contributed to Basel's sense of identity in the early 19th century, the Fabiola cult, which Kardinal Wiseman's 1854 book and Jean-Jacques Henner's 1885 portrait fuelled, was a significant factor in the revival of Catholicism in the second half of the 19th century. **With this artistic intervention, an inherently catholic idea is introduced to the context of the pragmatic, protestant merchant's class of Basel.** In this way, Francis Alÿs draws our attention to the existence of undercurrents and secret counter-currents which may be flowing in the prevailing cultural constellations even if they appear free of contradiction.



MINIATURES ROOM AND NEUSTÜCK ROOM – HANDHELD DEVOTIONALS AND COQUETTISH JEWELLERY

The green panelling of the Miniatures Room, essentially conceived as a room to be passed through, provides a contrasting background for the 24 medallions and small-format Fabiolas, dominated by the colour red, which Francis Alÿs has arranged in two rows. The medallions correspond to the many portraits of Basel citizens, miniatures, silverpoint drawings, silhouettes and oil paintings from the 18th and 19th centuries, distributed around the room. The private, even intimate character of this room is immediately apparent. **In the Miniatures Room, the fact is made very clear once more that, combed from flea markets, the Fabiola portraits are virtually worthless materially but highly valuable on an ideal level** – and this in two senses: on the one hand because for their original owners, who were mostly also their creators, they served as devotionals used for intercession and when reduced to very small formats could even be carried as lucky charms in a bag, worn as a brooch or on a chain; and, on the other hand, because through his intelligent intervention, their current owner, the artist Francis Alÿs, has given the collective portraits new meaning as part of a creative manifestation.

The Neustück Room is named after Maximilian Neustück who painted the charming landscape paintings on its walls in 1787 for Haus zum Rosenfeld. Via a constellation created by Francis Alÿs, here too the various layers of time represented in one single room are also made visible. A Fabiola portrait hangs above an empire chair. In the adjacent toilette

cabinet, fitted with the most modern hygiene apparatus available at the time, Francis Alÿs has placed various pieces of jewellery, pendants and a hat pin, all decorated with the likeness of Fabiola. This intervention has a playful twist to it; when not currently performing as a penitent Christian, Fabiola reverts to being a beauty-conscious aristocrat.

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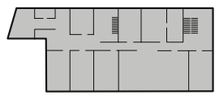
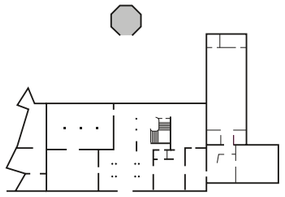


THIRD FLOOR – DOGGEDEKÄNSCHTERLI

From the Corridor with Cupboards a narrow, steep staircase leads up to the third floor, originally not accessible to visitors. This floor is likely to have held the servants' bedrooms and utility rooms. **Today, as simple museum rooms, they hold the collections of toys and dolls' houses** ('Doggedekänschterli' being the popular expression for large-scale doll houses in the local dialect).

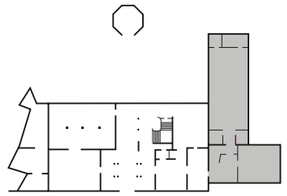
The interventionist approach is continued unabated here and Alÿs has filled the dolls' houses with tiny pictures of Fabiola. In the finely reproduced – 'en miniature' – domestic, everyday world of upper-classes, which the children could use to get playful practice for their future roles as adults, the mechanism of a modern approach to material culture is reflected. The average domestic life of a particular social class during a particular period can only be determined and then represented according to what is available. **In becoming a museum, Haus zum Kirschgarten, once used as a dwelling, has been turned into an outsized dolls' house, which the artist can play with and can allow others to play.**



GARDEN PAVILION – INNER RETREAT AND SUPERFICIAL ADORNMENT

The Garden Pavilion was taken from the former house 'zum Hof' in St.Alban-Vorstadt. Its owners were wholesale merchants who used their property for both domestic and business purposes. In 1768, the site came into the hands of the banker and industrialist Samuel Merian-Frey (1739–1825) and his wife, Susanna. The family decided to convert a plot of land they had bought in 1782 into a garden in the French style as part of which this pavilion was built. **Small pleasure houses used as a refuge of calm seclusion were familiar in Basel as elsewhere.** When Haus zum Hof was forced to make way for a road expansion, the building, resembling a small, round temple, was carefully dismantled and later rebuilt in the 'English' gardens of Haus zum Kirschgarten.

Inside the pavilion, a group of Fabiola portraits has appeared, encountering some no less impressive 'papier mâché' heads of a very different nature. With their oval faces, dark eyes and small mouths, the bonneted heads seem uncannily alive. **If the saintly image of Fabiola stands for reclusiveness and inner retreat, the head models, used in 19th-century hat shops to show off hats and bonnets, stand for the earthly desire for adornment and trinkets.**



ZUM KLEINEN KIRSCHGARTEN – HISTORIC LIVING SPACES FROM THE 19TH CENTURY

With a select few Fabiolas, Francis Alÿs' intervention extends to the neighbouring house, Zum Kleinen Kirschgarten. Johann Rudolf Burckhardt, the illustrious founder of Haus zum Kirschgarten, inherited this much more modest house with its grounds from his father in 1757. He acquired various adjoining parcels of land which enabled him to build Haus zum Kirschgarten and create its extensive gardens. It was only in 1986 that the two properties, split for many years, were reunited as part of Basel's Historisches Museum. **Since then, the Kleine Kirschgarten has been used to present interiors which represent the style epochs of the 19th century.**

On the first, floor several Fabiola portraits are nonchalantly arrayed amongst the colourful ranks of domestic living styles, displayed in a manner typical for a museum. One Fabiola has invaded the painted nobility of the picture gallery, with its bourgeois portraits and interior views.

Having reached the end of the tour through the exhibition, we may well wonder, not for the first time, why the image of Fabiola was copied so many times. Given the mysterious effect each face creates, between stereotype and unmistakable personality, the answer can at best be sensed, but certainly not explained with any certainty.

Schaulager presents

FRANCIS ALŸS: FABIOLA

12 March to 28 August 2011

Venue
Haus zum Kirschgarten
Historisches Museum Basel
Elisabethenstrasse 27
4051 Basel

Hours
Tues, Wed, Fri 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Thu 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Sat 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Sun 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Hours during Art Basel
13 –14 June, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
15 June, noon – 6 p.m.
16 –19 June, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Catalogue
With a large-format, illustrated section, the book will document Francis Alÿs' unique intervention at the Haus zum Kirschgarten, Basel's museum of extravagant 19th-century domestic lifestyles.

Essays by the exhibition's curator Lynne Cooke and by Dario Gamboni of the history of art department at the University of Geneva, provide in depth analysis alongside the documentation. The catalogue includes a bibliography for further reading.

The publication is part of the Schaulager-Hefte series. The publication is available in German and English. Price at Schaulager / Haus zum Kirschgarten: CHF 19.80

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