

Visitor information

Schaufenster Archiv The Brown Family Library

27 June until 5 December 2021

Since 2019, the *Schaufenster Archiv (Showcase Archive)* presents selected archival materials from the extensive content in the museum archives. The theme is changed twice yearly. In 2017 and 2018, the archive was systematically opened and partially digitalised. Its content includes documents, letters, postcards, diaries, and photographs from the estate of the Brown family. The timeframe of the preserved documents extends from 1850 to 1987.

Book lovers think they are in paradise in the knowledge store of the former Langmatt inhabitants. The library is not limited to the multilingual canon of world literature, but also provides information on history, geography, philosophy, religion, politics, music and the much-loved fine arts. Magnificent volumes stand back to back in the representative library on the ground floor and in Sidney H. Brown's study one floor up.

The books are up to 450 years old, and in addition to their contents, they are also attractive in their appearance: they are masterpieces in the art of bookbinding and printing. Historical photos of people reading the books show that they were not merely ornamental. A rich correspondence with dealers documents the targeted acquisition and development of a book collection that can still be seen today. The subject areas of the library reflect the individual interests of the family members.

Jenny, the lady of the house, educated herself in many different ways. She was just as enthusiastic about religious edification literature as she was about style-forming art magazines such as "Die Jugend" or "Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration".

Her husband, **Sidney W.**, was in intensive contact with booksellers in order to secure the classics of the 18th century, for example. He also acquired

valuable artists' editions from the famous art dealer and publisher Ambroise Vollard, to whom the Browns also owed important Impressionist paintings.

The **three sons** were photographed as literary figures from an early age, books in hand. They were to grow up to be educated citizens. Their first reading materials included encyclopaedias, atlases and magazines for children, which were lavishly bound in leather and inscribed in gold with the young owner's name. With Captain James Cook, they discovered the world, which they were to see through Corot's eyes and learn to understand with Platon.

The youngest son, the musically gifted **Harry F.**, loved Wagner's operas, soon composed himself and supported musician friends in his adopted home of Paris, who occasionally performed at the Langmatt.

John A., the middle son and art expert of the family, devoured the artists' biographies of the great masters as a child and marvelled at the paintings on the walls of the villa. From Paris, he organised exhibitions and arranged for his parents to acquire other works of art and rare books. He meticulously kept a card catalogue of his extensive reading.

Sidney H., the first-born, had a burning interest in foreign languages and cultures. His literary travels took him to ancient Egypt, Assyria, India and the Far East. As a delegate of the International Red Cross and later Secretary General of the BBC, he travelled the world extensively – in times of peace as well as in times of war.

LANGMATT

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