

## Visitor information

# Display Window Archive: Architectural Monument Langmatt

5th March to 6th August 2023

**Since its foundation stone was laid over 120 years ago, the stately home of the Brown industrialist family has undergone a series of structural metamorphoses that tell of changing demands and preferences. With a selection of surviving building plans, account books, photographic views and architectural trouvailles, the cabinet exhibition *Schaufenster Archiv* traces the eventful history from a private residence to a museum open to the public.**

With Karl Moser, the couple Sidney and Jenny Brown engaged a renowned architect who today is considered one of the protagonists of Swiss architectural modernism. Moser came from Baden and ran an architectural practice in Karlsruhe together with Robert Curjel. The original villa of 1901 already combined various stylistic elements on a modern floor plan, such as English country house and German Art Nouveau. The first interior design came from Karl Moser and the German ceramist Max Laeuger – the fountain in the cafeteria still survives from the latter. Wooden surfaces, wood-transparent or painted light plastered walls, a strict design and strong colors and patterns created a memorable interior. The heart motif was echoed throughout the building. Moser summed up his creation: "The new house says: Come in and look! I have a heart and soul like you!"

Many of the building's technical features were state-of-the-art at the time of construction. For example, running water and electricity flowed through the veins of the villa from the very beginning. The crank telephone, a central vacuum cleaner system, a water closet in the bathroom and a hot water heating system were considered to be the latest innovations. At that time, only the Federal Palace in Bern and a luxury hotel in Davos had a comparable heating system from the Sulzer company.

For the annex, also designed by Karl Moser, with picture gallery (1904 to 1906) – the first of its kind in Switzerland – the Browns chose a rather classicist style. For the time being, large-format paintings of the

Munich Secession, the modernist movement of the time, hung here. In the years that followed, the Browns turned to French Impressionism in their collecting. This new preference was soon to be reflected in the decoration of the villa. From 1917-1928 lasted the phase of a comprehensive "Frenchification" by the architects Arthur Bretschon, Rudolf Schmid, and Lefranc and Detombey. In particular, the rustic Moser interior decoration in numerous rooms gave way to an elegant French interior in the forms of the Dixhuitième.

Later, only minor structural changes took place in the villa. It was not until after the foundation was established that the villa was purposefully remodeled for museum use (from 1987 to 1990 by Paul Germann and Florens Deuchler). In addition to the installation of sanitary facilities, individual openings in the façade were closed, in particular the two skylights in the gallery. In addition, due to safety considerations, the staircase in the lower part was straightened so that it now leads directly to the museum reception. Inside the villa, most of the surfaces were overhauled, the floors were sanded and sealed and partially covered with carpets, and the walls were covered with new wallpaper and fabric coverings. Electrical wiring was renewed and redesigned to meet the requirements of a museum operation at the time.

In the course of its history, the villa underwent several selective alterations and extensions, but no fundamental renovation. For years, this unique architectural monument has been suffering from a loss of substance. In order to preserve the listed Langmatt for future generations, a complete renovation by the architectural firm Ernst Niklaus Fausch Partner AG is planned for 2024 to 2025. From the basement to the roof, the architects renovate a total area of 2630 m<sup>2</sup> in the villa, distributed over 75 rooms.

# LANGMATT

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