

Night – awake or dreaming

The new exhibition at the Museum der Kulturen Basel illuminates both the beautiful and the threatening sides of the night. It shows that a great deal happens at night.

Visitors are greeted by the ideal ambassador of the night: The bat fascinates, is the hero Batman and is considered a symbol of luck in China. However, it also has a threatening side and is associated with death as a deity in Central America.

Evil spirits and witches come into the limelight in the next room on night-blue stages and show what fears come up at night. One tactic to combat them can be to have night watchmen keep order or to lock out the night with door locks. If you dare, you can even follow demons through the nocturnal Basel (based on a video excerpt from the Basel Theatre).

Night is a great backdrop

In a fake bar, visitors can stand at the counter and reminisce about their own party nights – inspired by questions on beer mats and photos from Basel's nightlife. Here, curator Florence Roth shows that the night makes a great backdrop, for carnival or other festivities: Torches, for example, bring light to the region of Basel, while in Slovenia light houses are carried away by water when people no longer need so much light in spring. And in many cultures fireworks are part of the (handicraft) culture.

But even night owls get tired at some point. In the third room, they see how the world goes to sleep. Be it in hammocks, on plank beds or leaf bags, in cradles, with neck supports, in nightgowns or the latest unisex pyjamas, with warming stones or the "bed monk". And they learn what bed scissors are for.

Protection is also a topic here: specific aids such as the Arkilla blanket in Mali protect against mosquitoes, amulets and offering tables protect children. The little ones can also read stories in or under the giant bed and meet the famous monster.

Bringing light into the darkness

What helps us fall asleep or stay awake is displayed in a showcase. On comfortable seats, visitors can listen to what people do at night when they are awake. Afterwards, they are asked to vote whether they are an owl or a lark. The dream archive is waiting to be filled with dreams. Nightmares are "eaten" by the Japanese dream devourer.

It is really night in the last darkened room. Therefore, the first thing to do is to find one's bearings, with the help of the moon and stars in various shapes as well as timepieces such as hourglasses, clocks, etc. The visitors can operate the replica peep-box themselves and switch the lights on and off in cities like London. Opposite, they can follow what happened on Münsterplatz at night during the winter – the museum had placed a camera on the tower.

The best thing is to sit down and also admire paintings, woodcuts and photos that spread a wonderful evening and twilight atmosphere. Light is brought into the darkness by a wide variety of lanterns and the model of a street lamp of the future.

The exhibition will run from 28 April 2023 to 21 January 2024. Photos can be downloaded from our [website](#).