

**Aufbruch in die Gegenwart. Switzerland in photographs 1840 – 1960**

23rd October 2009 – 28th February 2010

Temporary exhibition in the National Museum Zurich

**PRESS RELEASE** October 2009

Embargo: 21.10.09, 11 am

## Photo exhibition in the National Museum, Zurich

**The exhibition «Aufbruch in die Gegenwart. Switzerland in Photographs 1840 – 1960» uses the Swiss National Museums' valuable collection of historical photographs to recount the history of Switzerland during a formative period both for the country and for the photographic medium.**

The exhibition begins with photos of the as yet untouched mountains in the 19th century. These pictures of an untamed, romantic Switzerland were fascinating for the tourists of that time, and have permanently shaped the way our country is perceived. The following pictures document the gradual conquest of nature by tourism and agriculture, and the transition from an agrarian economy into a modern industrial state.

The theme of the second section of the exhibition is change: movement around Switzerland was accelerated by the creation of a huge travel infrastructure. In this period railways, road networks and airports were built, with a galvanizing effect for both industrialisation and tourism.

The third section is devoted to the persons through whom this whole development was made possible. The photos are of individuals, whether building labourers, housewives or industrialists, such as Alfred Escher. Other photos reflect Switzerland's need for role models: General Guisan or William Tell are made into "heroes", but are later replaced by actors and sportsmen. The photographic medium in particular contributed through its easy propagation to the high degree of recognition for these personalities. The work of both professional photographers and amateur «takers of snaps» has made it possible for visitors to the exhibition to see and understand how modern Switzerland grew to become what it is today.

The exhibition was created in collaboration with Ruth and Peter Herzog, who last year offered to the Swiss National Museums the second part, after 1994, of their comprehensive collection of Swiss photographs.

### **Exhibition publication**

The accompanying publication «Aufbruch in die Gegenwart. Die Schweiz in Fotografien 1840 – 1960» is published by Limmat Verlag, edited by Dieter Bachmann and the Swiss National Museums. Available at the Museum shop and from booksellers (CHF 48.-, ISBN 978-3-85791-593-2).

### **[www.aufbruch.landesmuseum.ch](http://www.aufbruch.landesmuseum.ch)**

The website contains further information about the exhibition and the accompanying programme.

### **Sponsoring by three foundations**

The purchase of the collection and the exhibition were made possible through the generous support of «Sophie und Karl Binding Stiftung», «Georg und Bertha Schwyzer-Winiker» foundation and another important Zurich foundation.

**All the media texts and a selection of pictures are available for downloading from the «press» section of the homepage [www.aufbruch.landesmuseum.ch](http://www.aufbruch.landesmuseum.ch)**

### **For further information, please contact**

Eliane Burckhardt, Head of PR, Swiss National Museums

phone +41 (0)44 218 65 49, e-mail: [eliane.burckhardt@slm.admin.ch](mailto:eliane.burckhardt@slm.admin.ch)