

Under construction : 'House of History North Rhine-Westphalia'

## Schlebusch : Traffic light man 'Toripolliisi' on his way to the museum

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The future 'House of History North Rhine-Westphalia' (Haus der Geschichte HdG NRW) will document, visualise, raise awareness of and bring to life the history of Germany's most populous federal state since it was founded in 1946. To this end, the historic 'Behrensbau' (1911) on Mannesmannufer in the federal state capital of Düsseldorf will be converted into a museum of contemporary history by 2029.



In order to promote this building and build up the collection until completion, the 'Stiftung HdG NRW' has been travelling with a 'MuseumMobil' since October 2022. For ten to twelve days at a time, the MuseumMobil with a total of 53 exhibits from North Rhine-Westphalia will make stops in all 53 districts and independent cities in the state. The most recent stop was in Leverkusen from 11 to 22 September 2024 on the fore-court of the Rathaus-Galerie.

During the targeted search for objects and me-

morabilia to be made available to 'the general public and the collective memory' in the state museum in the future, the 'Haus der Geschichte NRW Foundation' came across the 'Toripolliisi pedestrian traffic light' in Leverkusen-Schlebusch.

'The partnership between Leverkusen and the Finnish city of Oulu could shed a special light on town twinning in NRW.

As Chairman of the German-Finnish Society of Leverkusen and Deputy Mayor of the city, you may therefore be able to help us to acquire a 'Toripolliisi' in the form of a traffic light glass for our museum collection on a permanent and long-term basis,' said Dr Gabriele Uelsberg, member of the Presidium of the Haus der Geschichte NRW Foundation, addressing the collection request to Leverkusen's Deputy Mayor Bernhard Marewski.



Dr. Gabriele Uelsberg, Member of the Executive Committee of the Haus der Geschichte NRW Foundation / Director of the Collections Department, receives the 'Toripolliisi pedestrian signal traffic light' from Jochen Thiele, City of Leverkusen Civil Engineering / Signalling Systems, and Deputy Mayor Bernhard Marewski.

Photo : Rüdiger Scholz

One 'traffic light glass'? 'Toripolliisi' : 'green'-going or 'red'-standing? Or two traffic light glasses, 'green' and 'red'?

Marewski found creative and energetic support from Jochen Thiele, responsible for signalling systems in the city's civil engineering department.

At the opening event for MuseumMobil in Leverkusen on 10 September 2024 in the Rathaus-Galerie, the two were able to surprise HdG Collection Director Dr Gabriele Uelsberg with a real 'Toripolliisi - pedestrian signal in LED technology'.

As a 'symbol of one of the oldest city partnerships in NRW' (Gabriele Uelsberg), the illuminated traffic light will enrich the museum collection of the 'Haus für Geschichte Nordrhein-Westfalen' in Düsseldorf in future.

The original 'Toripolliisi' - 'Marktpolizist' in German - is a 2.20 metre high bronze statue by the Finnish artist Kaarlo Mikkonen. The statue has stood in the market square of Oulu, Leverkusen's twin city in northern Finland, since 1987 and is one of the city's landmarks. The statue is dedicated to the constables who used to ensure order and peace on Oulu's market square and were greatly appreciated by the traders thanks to their calming manner.

Since 8 May 2019, there has been a pedestrian traffic light in Leverkusen-Schlebusch on Oulu Street between the market square and Lindenplatz with the 'Toripolliisi' as a 'traffic light man'. According to Bernhard Marewski, Chairman of the German-Finnish Society Leverkusen, this 'only market policeman pedestrian traffic light of its kind in the world' was installed to commemorate and honour the long-standing close friendship between Leverkusen and Oulu after the 50th anniversary of the town twinning was celebrated with a series of events in both cities in 2018.



The official Leverkusen 'object of the place' for the collection of the 'Haus der Geschichte NRW' - a hand-signed 'Bayer 04 Leverkusen championship football shirt' - was presented at the opening event of 'MuseumMobil NRW in Leverkusen' by football legend Rüdiger Vollborn, record player for Bayer 04 Leverkusen.

The championship football shirt and the 'Forza Bayer' fan jersey were then taken into the MuseumMobil NRW. Both shirts will be travelling around NRW from now on.

Dr. Gabriele Uelsberg, Haus der Geschichte NRW Foundation, with presenter Anke Feller, world-class track and field athlete, and football legend Rüdiger Vollborn for Bayer 04 Leverkusen with the 'Bayer 04 Leverkusen champion football shirt'  
*Photo : Bernhard Marewski*

