

A COMMON FUTURE IN THE KUNSTHAUS EXTENSION

The Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft are joining forces to create the leading centre for French Impressionism outside of Paris.

Today, 60 years after it first saw the light of day, Emil Bührle's is still one of the leading collections of 20th-century art. It focuses on French Impressionist painting, which has always enjoyed vivid interest in Switzerland and is also represented in the Kunsthaus Zürich's own collection.

At the Bührle Collection's current home, however, in Zurich's Zollikerstrasse, the private collection had been seen annually by no more than 10,000 visitors before even those numbers dwindled to just a few hundred following the notorious robbery in February of 2008. The Kunsthaus, on the other hand, welcomes around 300,000 guests each year, eager to view its examples of French painting and of the schools that preceded and followed it.

For this reason, the Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection has accepted the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft's invitation to move into the Kunsthaus extension on Heimplatz, which is due to be completed by 2017.

David Chipperfield's design offers the Collection around 1000 m² of display area, or more than a quarter of the space reserved in the extension building for the museum's permanent collection; the skylights planned for the extension's second upper level will afford ideal lighting conditions for the exhibition of just such Impressionist open-air paintings as the Bührle Collection boasts. The combination of the Kunsthaus Zürich's own collection with the Bührle Collection will make the museum Europe's leading centre for French Impressionism outside of Paris. The artistic concept for the New Kunsthaus provides for the museum's examples of classical modernism to be juxtaposed with the Collection's holdings, and thus to offer the viewing public a seamless experience of the epoch.

About 180 works are to be entrusted to the Kunsthaus for an unlimited period. In turn, the Kunsthaus undertakes to maintain the Collection, and to present it as a unified collection into perpetuity. The Foundation will be unable to remove the Collection, whether in its entirety or in part, so long as the Kunstgesellschaft cleaves to its undertaking to exhibit the Collection as an integral whole in the rooms provided for it within the complex. The Foundation may not sell any of the works comprised by the Collection.

The Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection will continue to enjoy juridical autonomy when the works of art move to their new location. Since the Foundation has no financial means at its disposal, the collector's family are studying the feasibility of a private donation to the Kunsthaus extension. The permanent loan of the paintings is itself of incalculable value.

Zurich and the Kunstgesellschaft alike routinely profited during Emil Bührle's lifetime from his active championing of the Kunsthaus Zürich; indeed, works like Claude Monet's large-format water lilies and Auguste Rodin's 'Gates of Hell', which are among the industrialist's gifts to the museum, have become an integral part of Switzerland's oldest combined collection and exhibition space. Furthermore, by financing an exhibition wing for the museum in the 1950s Emil Georg Bührle created a venue used to this day for unique events at which art and its public are brought face to face. Provided Zurich's electorate approves the

necessary credit facility, to be put to a popular vote in 2012, the extension project from the drawing board of the renowned British architect will be built in all its pristine elegance, and the traditional collaboration of public museum and private collection will continue. If, however, the credit facility is not approved, Zurich will have missed its chance, and the Collection will remain in its present private museum, where security risks and restricted infrastructure render it inaccessible to the general public.

To consolidate in the form of a permanent partnership the affinity first recognized two generations ago, the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, the Board of the Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection and the collector's family have set their sights on success at the polls – among other things by having staged a show of the Bührle Collection at the Kunsthaus Zürich under the title 'Van Gogh, Cézanne, Monet. The Bührle Collection visits the Kunsthaus Zürich'. The exhibition ran from 12 February until 16 May 2010 and included comprehensive documentation of the history of the E.G. Bührle Collection, as well as a discussion of the Collection's future at the side of the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft. The interest of over 100'000 visitors has proofed that the relocation of the private collection under the roof of the Kunsthaus has the potential to attract a significant number of art lovers.

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