

Press Release
Zurich, 9 February 2006

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'Feast of Color. From Picasso, van Gogh and Klee to Kandinsky, Kirchner and Matisse – The Merzbacher-Mayer Collection.'

From 10 February to 14 May 2006 the Kunsthhaus Zürich will be showing one of the most important private collections of modern art: the Merzbacher-Mayer Collection. Starting with the great masters of Impressionism, post-Impressionism and Fauvism, the collection spans an arc taking in the artists of the 'Brücke' and the 'Blauer Reiter', Italian Futurism and Russian Constructivism right up to the Zurich Concretists and the most recent past.

The exhibition 'Feast of Color' is conceived by Kunsthhaus curator Tobia Bezzola in close collaboration with the collector Werner Merzbacher.

Amongst the almost 200 paintings and sculptures are works by the leading exponents of all the most important European movements in 20th-century art: Impressionism (Monet, Cézanne, Renoir), post-Impressionism (van Gogh, Picasso), the Fauves (Derain, Matisse, Vlaminck, Braque), the 'Brücke' artists Heckel and Kirchner, Germans persecuted during the Third Reich such as Nolde, Barlach and Beckmann, the 'Blaue Reiter' artists Jawlensky, Kandinsky and Münter, Italian Futurists (Severini, Boccioni), Russian Constructivists (Malevich, Goncharova and others), the Cubist Léger, and the Spaniard Miró. The younger generation of painters and sculptors working between the 1950s and 90s, including Richard Paul Lohse and Sam Francis, is also notably represented by Calder, González, Tinguely, Moore and Rickey.

On the surface all the works are connected by the dominance of colour over subject matter. The result is a glowing overview with which the exhibition in the Kunsthhaus Zurich traces the birth and development of the most important schools and trends in modern art. The main criterion guiding the collector Werner Merzbacher in his choice of works has always been the joy they give him; he is never distracted by commercial considerations. He chooses works that move him because, as he himself says, they touch a chord in his own nature. Hence this exhibition in the Kunsthhaus is all about the history of art and the story of a family.

INTERNATIONAL SUCCESSES

In Jerusalem (1998/99), in a series of Japanese cities including Tokyo (2001), and in London (2002), hundreds of thousands of visitors have admired the collection owned by this businessman and his family, whose home is in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland.

THE COLLECTOR'S STORY

Werner Merzbacher, born in 1928 in Oehringen (southern Germany) arrived in Switzerland in 1939 as a child refugee. His wish is to share his passion for art with a wide public out of gratitude to Zurich and Switzerland. The starting point of the collection is the exclusive group of extraordinary paintings which Gabrielle Merzbacher-Mayer inherited from her grandparents, Bernhard and Auguste Mayer. Since the 1960s the couple have extended their collection with the purchase of further important works. A number of pieces, formerly owned by the Mayer Family, have been lent by their owners for the duration of the exhibition, thereby allowing the organisers to reconstruct the family collection from its early days right up to the present.

COLLABORATION

The Kunsthau Zürich, which has long toyed with the idea of presenting an exhibition that traces the history of art from the point of view of a private collector, found in Werner Merzbacher a patron of the visual arts who has over recent decades – with curiosity, a feeling for art, passion, courage and determination – created an ensemble of modern painting and sculpture that consistently maintains the highest of standards. In the past the Merzbacher Family has repeatedly reaffirmed its close ties with the Kunsthau with gifts and extended loans to the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft. In terms of quality, the works on show can comfortably hold their own with the collection in the Kunsthau Zürich.

ART EDUCATION

Public guided tours, in German, take place on Tuesdays at 12.15 p.m., on Wednesdays at 6.30 p.m., on Fridays at 3 p.m. and on Sundays at 11 a.m. In French on Saturday, 18.3.06 and in English on Saturday, 15.4.06, both at 11 a.m. Private guided tours – also in foreign languages – can be arranged as of now by phoning +41 (0)44 253 84 84 (Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–12 noon). Free groups and school classes must register in advance. Audioguides are available in German, English and French for individual visitors.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by DuMont. Contributions by curator Tobia Bezzola, Stephanie Rachum, Magdalena M. Moeller and Werner Merzbacher (Preface) will provide the reader with a wealth of detail regarding the contents and development of this private collection. Besides anecdotes concerning personal relationships between the collectors' family, artists and gallerists, and a life lived between Ascona, Zurich and New York, there is also an art-historical analysis by Linda Schädler of the significance of individual groups of works. The catalogue (360 pages, 175 illustrations of works and details) is on sale in the Kunsthau Shop for CHF 49.–.

A contribution to culture by Credit Suisse – Partner of the Kunsthaus Zürich.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich
Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthhaus.ch

Opening times

Tues–Thurs 10 a.m.–9 p.m.
Fri–Sun 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Closed on Mondays

Public Holidays

Easter 13–17 April 2006, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Closed on 24 April and 1 May 2006.

Admission including audioguide

CHF 17.- / 11.- (concessions) / 13.- per head for groups of 20 or more.

Advanced Sales (optional)

Switzerland: Kombi-Ticket RailAway/SBB, with 20% reduction on rail travel and entrance to the exhibition, at SBB stations and by phoning Rail Service: 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19 per min.). Special rates for groups.

Other Sales Points

Switzerland: Magasins Fnac, Tel. +33 1 4157 3212, www.fnac.ch

France: Magasins Fnac, Carrefour, Tel. 0892 684 694 (0.34 € per min.), www.fnac.com

Belgium: Magasins Fnac, Tel. 0 900 00 600 (0.45 € per min.), www.fnac.com

For further information and visual materials, please contact

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