

Press release

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## 100 YEARS KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

**In 2010 the Kunsthaus Zürich will celebrate its hundredth anniversary. Switzerland's oldest combined collection and exhibition space opened its doors in Karl Moser's late Jugendstil museum building on the Heimplatz in 1910, and now, in honour of the centenary, the Kunsthaus will showcase its opulent collection, including many donations, and mount a major Picasso show in tribute to its tradition of key exhibitions. In 2015 the artistic idea of a dynamic museum for the 21st century will become reality, and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft's success story, which owes its inception in 1787 to the initiative of local burghers, will have been continued in a further exciting chapter – the Kunsthaus extension.**

### CHRONOLOGY OF THE KUNSTHAUS AND ITS COLLECTION AS OF 1910

On 17 April 1910, on land donated by City Councillor Landolt, the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft opened the 'Kunsthaus' – neither a museum nor an art gallery, but rather, as noted by architect Karl Moser, both at once. The word 'Kunsthaus' in its name signaled the Kunstgesellschaft's will to inscribe itself in the tradition of other democratic institutions, such as the guild hall and the schoolhouse. To this day, the Kunsthaus is committed to openness and continuity.

### SWISS ART SETS THE TONE

The first conservator, Wilhelm Wartmann (director until 1949), initially focused on Swiss art, a reasonably circumscribed field, and complemented the store of contemporary work, which enjoyed particular interest at the time, with groups of paintings from the Late Gothic period as well as by Johann Heinrich Füssli. When its major exhibition of work by Ferdinand Hodler in 1917 made it clear that the Kunstgesellschaft did not have sufficient means at its disposal for acquisitions, the silk magnate Alfred Rüetschi founded the Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde (Zurich Association of Friends of the Arts), which to this day regularly enhances the Kunsthaus collection with the purchase of significant pieces. Rüetschi himself made several of Hodler's large compositions and key landscapes available.

### DARING TO BE AVANTGARDE: IMPRESSIONISM AND EXPRESSIONISM

In 1920 the Kunsthaus was bequeathed Hans Schuler's collection, and thus acquired its first works of French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in the form of pieces by Renoir, Cézanne, van Gogh and Bonnard. Years of preparation

had gone into Wartmann's first show of work by Edvard Munch when it opened in 1922, followed in turn by his inauguration of the largest collection of Munch's art outside of Scandinavia.

In 1925 Karl Moser added to the Kunsthaus complex, and in 1929 the banker Hans E. Mayenfisch began to purchase paintings by living Swiss artists, amassing over 450 works by the time of his death in 1957. Nobel Prize laureate Leopold Ruzicka made a foundation in 1949 of his extraordinary collection of 17th-century Dutch painting.

René Wehrli succeeded Wartmann as director in 1950 and shifted the museum's main focus to French painting after Monet, two of whose large water-lily paintings were acquired with the help of the industrialist Emil Georg Bührle in the wake of the Monet retrospective. In 1958 the main exhibition hall, with its infinitely adjustable configuration, was inaugurated. In planning by the Pfister brothers since 1944, its construction had been financed by Bührle.

### OLD MASTERS, DADA AND PHOTOGRAPHY

A group of art-lovers led by the Bechtler brothers created a foundation in 1965 of the leading collection of art by Alberto Giacometti, who himself donated further works. In 1966 Nelly Bär endowed the Nelly and Werner Bär gallery and donated a key group of sculptures by Rodin and Richier, among others. The comprehensive collection of work by Marc Chagall was initiated in the 1970s thanks to Gustav Zumsteg, soap manufacturer and owner of the Kronenhalle restaurant, and with the support of a number of patrons and the artist himself. During the same period, Erna and Curt Burgauer began donating examples of modern art to the Kunsthaus, and in 1976 Erwin Müller's extension was opened, providing an excellent venue for contemporary genres above all. Felix Baumann replaced René Wehrli as director that same year. In 1980, thanks to numerous donations, an extensive collection of works documenting the Dada movement was established, while the Johanna and Walter L. Wolf collection added new works of French art from Impressionism to classical modernism in 1984. Art dealers Betty and David M. Koetser donated their important collection of Dutch paintings and works of the Italian Baroque and the Venetian Settecento as a foundation in 1986. To mark the sesquicentennial of the photographic medium in 1989, commodities trader Marc Rich presented the Kunsthaus with a handsome gift: 74 photographs, mainly original prints, tracing the development of classical art photography from the mid-1900s to the present day. Finally, in 1995, Walter Haefner presented the Kunsthaus with twelve outstanding paintings by artists such as Monet and Magritte.

### RESTORATION

In 1998 the Kunsthaus became one of the first art museums in Switzerland to have its own website. Restoration of the Villa Tobler as the new home of management and to serve as a venue for representational purposes was

completed in 2000. In September of that year Christoph Becker succeeded Felix Baumann as the new director and the electorate of Zurich voted in favour of a loan of 28.5 million Swiss francs for renovation of the Kunsthaus. The collection and exhibition rooms were thoroughly overhauled between 2001 and 2005 and re-opened with an accrochage of newly acquired contemporary works. The Kunsthaus remained open throughout this period. The works of Alberto Giacometti were given their own suite in what had been the administrative wing of Moser's construction. The Collection of Prints and Drawings was enhanced with 55 master engravings by Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), the gift of Landamman Dietrich Schindler. In 2001 the Kunstrat decided on a new strategy: internal working groups and experts were to participate in public hearings on the future of the Kunsthaus, and thus underpin plans for structural modernization; acquisitions were to come increasingly from the contemporary art world; and Old Masters from various collections were to be integrated into a joint presentation, which would enable them to attain international renown. Bruno and Odette Giacometti favoured the Kunsthaus in 2006 with a donation to the Alberto Giacometti Foundation, whose holdings enhanced with over 90 bronzes and original plasters make it the world's key Giacometti collection.

### THE FUTURE: AN EXTENSION FOR ART AND THE PUBLIC

In May of 2002 the President of the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, Thomas W. Bechtler, together with Director Christoph Becker and Mayor Elmar Ledergerber made the case for an extension on the Heimplatz. Walter B. Kielholz, who in June of 2002 succeeded Bechtler at the head of what has now become, with some 20,000 members, one of Europe's largest art associations, also lent his support to the plan, whose aims included continuing to accept donations and in future to show 20 percent of the museum's own collection, in particular art produced since 1960, rather than the ten percent exhibited at present. The Kunsthaus extension, to be built by the Kunstgesellschaft in partnership with the city of Zurich and the Stiftung Zürcher Kunsthaus and with a planned completion date in 2015, is to meet the demands of a 21st-century public. The design submitted by David Chipperfield was the winner of the architecture competition held in 2008. Joined by an underground passageway, the ensemble comprising the existing building with the extension will constitute the New Kunsthaus, Switzerland's largest art museum. The agreement reached in 2006 with the world-renowned Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection laid the groundwork for the leading centre of French painting and Impressionism outside of Paris. The future international ranking of the Kunsthaus Zürich will likely be established in 2011/2012, when Zurich's electorate votes on a credit facility for the Kunsthaus extension. If the project, a joint undertaking with the city of Zurich and the Stiftung Zürcher Kunsthaus, is approved, as of 2015 the New Kunsthaus will receive 400,000 visitors annually, an increase of more than 30 percent over current footfall. For the Kunsthaus, this fourth extension is a key

milestone in its history, while the city of Zurich will have a rare chance to take a leading position in the international cultural sweepstakes. Among the project's enthusiastic boosters are high-level collectors and patrons, the very kind who played a frequent role in the museum's century of success by supporting the ambitions of a director and making crucial donations to the collection. Thanks to the contributions of its members and the public sector, the Kunsthaus Zürich has always been able to provide the infrastructure required for exemplary presentation and up-to-date outreach. The whole city of Zurich is the better for it, and it looks like the success story will continue beyond the anniversary year.

### CENTENARY PROGRAMME

Indeed, the shows planned for the Kunsthaus Zürich's centenary in 2010 are eagerly awaited: from 'Van Gogh, Cézanne, Monet – The Bührle Collection Visits the Kunsthaus Zürich' to a reconstruction of the first public collection of paintings in Switzerland, the Gessner Cabinet, and a tribute to Pablo Picasso and his first-ever museum retrospective, mounted in 1932 at the Kunsthaus Zürich and to this day unrivalled in its comprehensive presentation of work from the artist's first 35 years of creation.

The exhibition and the centenary are supported by Credit Suisse – Partner of the Kunsthaus Zürich.

### **Note to media**

The following can be downloaded under [www.kunsthau.ch/en/information/press](http://www.kunsthau.ch/en/information/press):

- an account of the early years of the Kunsthaus Zürich, which owes its existence to Switzerland's most venerable art association still in operation today, the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft (founded 1787)
- a survey of a century of exhibitions, from 1910 to 2010
- current Kunsthaus facts and figures
- interior and exterior views of the Kunsthaus, both historical and contemporary

Contact for further information:

Björn Quellenberg

Head Press and Communication

[bjoern.quellenberg@kunsthau.ch](mailto:bjoern.quellenberg@kunsthau.ch)

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 11