

Press release
Zurich, 24 May 2018

Merzbacher Collection comes to the Kunsthaus Zürich

The Kunsthaus Zürich is to receive the collection of Gabriele and Werner Merzbacher as a long-term loan, one of the most important private collections of modern art. A total of 65 works have been promised to the Kunsthaus for at least 20 years. They include paintings by the great masters of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Fauvism, members of the 'Brücke' and 'Blauer Reiter' groups, and many more.

The cooperation, which involves 65 paintings and a minimum commitment of 20 years, is a gesture of gratitude to Zurich and Switzerland by Werner Merzbacher, who was born in Oehringen, Germany, in 1928 and came to Switzerland as a child refugee in 1939, and a chance for him to share his passion for art with the public at large. The Kunsthaus Zürich has been given the opportunity to view almost 200 paintings and sculptures and select the works that best complement its own important holdings and the Bührle Collection, which also moves to the enlarged Kunsthaus from 2020. The artists represented include leading figures from the key European art movements of the 20th century: Impressionism (Monet, Cézanne, Renoir), Post-Impressionism (van Gogh, Picasso), Fauvism (Derain, Matisse, Vlaminck, Braque), the 'Brücke' (Heckel and Kirchner), Germans persecuted in the Third Reich such as Nolde, Barlach and Beckmann, 'Blauer Reiter' members Jawlensky, Kandinsky and Münter, Italian Futurists (Severini, Boccioni), Russian Constructivists (Malevich, Goncharova and others), the Cubist Léger and Spanish artist Miró. Among the more recent artists of the 1950s to 1990s are Richard Paul Lohse and Sam Francis as well as Calder, González, Tinguely, Moore and Rickey.

A FEAST OF COLOUR FOR GENERATIONS

At the most immediate level, the works are linked together by the dominance of colour. They will combine to present visitors to the Kunsthaus Zürich with a dazzling panorama spanning the birth and evolution of the most significant schools and movements in modern art. The starting point of the collection is the exclusive group of exceptional works that Gabriele Merzbacher-Mayer inherited from her grandparents Bernhard and Auguste Mayer and that, since the 1960s, has been progressively enriched through further acquisitions of great art. Werner Merzbacher picks out those that touch him because, as he says, they

resemble his own character. The selection that will be coming to the Kunsthaus therefore tells a dual story, of both art and a family.

INTERNATIONAL SUCCESSES

The collection assembled by the businessman and his family, who live in the canton of Zurich, has already been exhibited to great acclaim, drawing hundreds of thousands to exhibitions in Jerusalem (1998/99), various Japanese cities including Tokyo (2001), and London (2002). In 2006 it was presented under the banner 'Feast of Color' at the Kunsthaus and was seen by over 100,000 visitors in the space of a few months.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS: THE ZÜRCHER KUNSTGESELLSCHAFT

The work of the Kunsthaus is overseen by the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, a private association. Two-thirds of the museum's collection consists of donations and long-term loans, meaning it is almost uniquely placed to document the history of institutional collecting with art history as seen by private individuals. Since 2000 Switzerland's oldest combined collecting and exhibiting institution has become home to the Bührle, Looser, Brunner, Knecht and Merzbacher collections, complementing the already prestigious holdings of the Alberto Giacometti Foundation, the Koetser, Ruzicka and Bär collections and others. With Gabriele and Werner Merzbacher, the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft has established a partnership with two patrons of the arts who, through a combination of thirst for knowledge, artistic taste, passion, courage and drive have, over the last few decades, assembled a collection of painting and sculpture that is as systematic as it is superlative, and a worthy complement to the collection of the Kunsthaus Zürich.

CONTACT FOR THE MEDIA

Visual materials are available at www.kunsthhaus.ch > Information > Press.

For further information contact

Kunsthaus Zürich, Björn Quellenberg, Head of Press and Public Relations

bjoern.quellenberg@kunsthhaus.ch

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 13