

The Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation

The Rupf Collection

Hermann and Margrit Rupf's collection is unique: As the first private Swiss collectors intensely interested in abstract art, from 1907 onwards the couple collected works shortly after their completion and according to their own criteria. Among the collection holdings we have truly wonderful groups of works by the fauves (Othon Friesz and André Derain), the cubists (Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, and Fernand Léger) as well as works by Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and André Masson.

The art dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Hermann Rupf's lifelong friend, played a pivotal role in the collector couple's collecting strategy.

In 1954 the collection with around 300 artworks and numerous art books was entrusted to the Kunstmuseum Bern and established as a foundation. Today the collection holdings amount to around 1'100 works of art (paintings, sculptures, installations, and works on paper).

The holdings are under the care of the Kunstmuseum Bern's department for conservation and restoration. For those interested it readily supplies documentation on current projects.

The Collector Couple

Hermann Rupf (1880-1962) was employed back office in the banking trade from 1901 to 1903 in Frankfurt where he met Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884-1979). In 1905 after a sojourn in Paris and meeting up with Kahnweiler again, Rupf returned to his father's haberdashery store in Bern. In 1908 onwards he and his brother-in-law Ruedi Hossmann took over the management of the business (Hossmann & Rupf). Meanwhile Kahnweiler started up a gallery in Paris in 1907 (Simon Gallery from 1920-1940, from 1940 known as Louise Leiris Gallery). Rupf was one of his very first clients and remained a faithful customer for the rest of his life.

Besides collecting, the couple was highly supportive of artists, often also giving them advice. Rupf was not only a patron of the arts but also a very socially engaged person. Additionally, in his capacity as an art critic he fulfilled an important role in securing acceptance and popularity for contemporary art. His texts and critiques are to be understood as arguments against conservative art policies and in support of contemporary art. Rupf was an active member of the Social Democratic Party.

The Foundation

The Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation was established in 1954 by the couple with the greater part of their collection. The foundation's goal is to preserve and augment the collection holdings. The Kunstmuseum Bern was entrusted with caring for the foundation holdings, which amounted to around approximately 300 works of modern art in 1954.

Still today the foundation has succeeded in constantly augmenting the collection by means of the endowment allocated by the collector couple for this purpose. In harmony with Hermann and Margrit Rupf's approach to collecting, the new accessions comprise mostly contemporary art. In recent years the foundation acquired key groups of works by Swiss artists, such as Bernhard Luginbühl, Meret Oppenheim, Markus Raetz, Dieter Roth, and Otto Tschumi, as well as representatives of concrete art, such as Richard Paul Lohse or Max Bill. Simultaneously international positions in art have extended the scope of the Rupf Collection with works by Ad Reinhard, Donald Judd, Joseph Beuys, Brice Marden, Joseph Kosuth, Lucio Fontana, or James Turrell.

In 2007, to further pursue a planned and logical further expansion of the collection, the Rupf Foundation sanctioned a suitable concept for purchasing strategies:

- supplement the Rupf Collection, that is, existing groups of works of the collection put together by Hermann and Margrit Rupf.
- supplement groups of works that were largely acquired by the foundation since 1954.
- the acquisition of contemporary works of recent younger generation artists whose works pursue similar conceptual goals to those predominant in the collection.