

EN

Back from Munich

Highlights of the Collection from
Seven Centuries of Swiss Art

1.4. – 26.6.2011

**KUNST
MUSEUM
BERN**

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Exhibition Plan

PART 1 (BASEMENT)

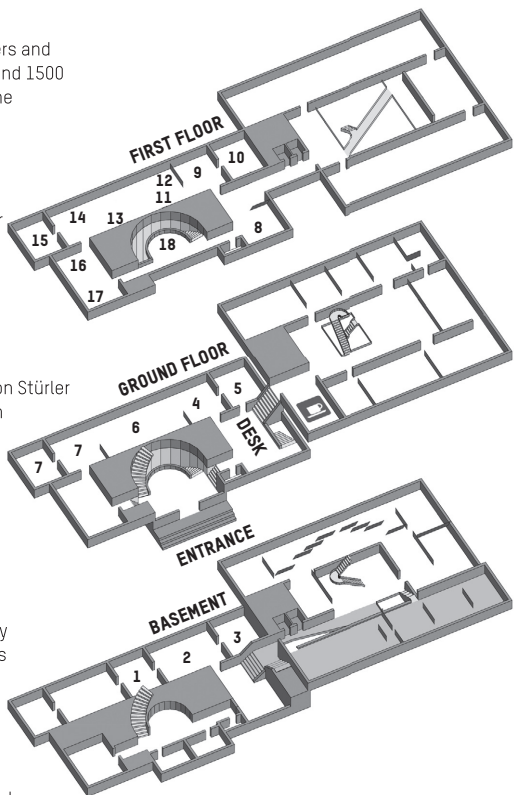
- 1/2 Italian Medieval Masters and Bernese Painting around 1500
- 3 Swiss Painting from the 16th - 18th Century

PART 2 (GROUND FLOOR)

- 4 Swiss Landscapes
- 5 Caspar Wolf: A Pioneer in Alpine Landscapes
- 5 Franz Niklaus König: Transparent Paintings
- 6 Wilhelm Tell
- 6 Genre Painting
- 6 Swiss Salon Art
- 6 Academic Art: Adolf von Stürler and Karl Stauffer-Bern
- 6 Symbolism
- 7 Ferdinand Hodler

PART 3 (FIRST FLOOR)

- 8 Neoimpressionism
- 9 Paul Klee
- 10 Adolf Wölfli and the Surrealists
- 11 The Onset of Modernity
- 12 Kirchner and the Swiss Expressionists
- 13 Alberto Giacometti
- 14 Concrete Art
- 15 Markus Raetz Room
- 16 Meret Oppenheim
- 17 Swiss Contemporary Art
- 18 The Large Stairwell Old and Contemporary



Introduction

The Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung Munich showed 150 artworks from the Kunstmuseum Bern collection under the title ... *Giacometti, Hodler, Klee ... Hosting the Kunstmuseum Bern* from mid-September 2010 to January 2011. After this successful exhibition with over 80'000 visitors, the highlights of our collection are now returning and are presented to the public in Bern under the title *Back from Munich*. By and large we maintained the same selection of works of the Munich show, exhibiting them on three levels in our old museum building. The exhibition comprises 180 paintings, works on paper, sculptures, and installations. All were created by Swiss artists. It is directly connected to the newly hung presentation of our collection on the first level that was carried out by Director Matthias Frehner personally and opens up many options for comparison and deeper understanding of the artworks. The initial idea of the two museums to show the "best of the collection" was soon discarded. Impressed by the Kunstmuseum Bern's 2009 exhibition *Director's Choice: Swiss Landscapes from 1800 to 1900* as well as by the museum's additional holdings, the Munich team of curators decided to present highlights from seven centuries of Swiss art. Giacometti, Hodler, and Klee were the world-famed triumvirate embellishing the title of the show instead of Duccio, van Gogh, and Picasso. The concept of the presentation as well as the organisation was carried out collaboratively by both museums: Munich's outside view of the collection enhances Bern's knowledge of its holdings, resulting in a multifaceted tour of Swiss art revealing its great scope. A richly illustrated catalogue has

been published in conjunction with this overview of our holdings. A conceptual path through the exhibition commences with the 15th century altar panels by the Bernese Masters of the Carnation. It was painted when the Swiss Confederacy was established as independent from the Holy Roman Empire. Portraits from the 16th to 18th centuries reveal Protestantism's impact on pictorial art in the Alpine republic. Majestic mountain panoramas reflect the idea of a nation state in the way it was idealized by Friedrich Schiller in *Wilhelm Tell* (1804). Groups of works of individual artists ranging from Albert Anker, Karl Stauffer-Bern, and Böcklin to Hodler give a clear outline of the young federal capital's art tradition – a tradition that is rapidly becoming renowned internationally. We have with Alberto Giacometti, Paul Klee, Meret Oppenheim, and Jean Tinguely artists who have been applauded on the international stage. Two further foci of the exhibition are Ludwig Kirchner together with his Swiss followers and the Zurich concrete artists, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Richard Paul Lohse, and Max Bill. Dieter Roth, Daniel Spoerri, Franz Gertsch, Markus Raetz, Pippilotti Rist, and others represent contemporary art trends. The presentation of the collection in *Back from Munich* is not, however, restricted to showing only familiar highlights such as Ferdinand Hodler's large-format figure paintings or Félix Vallotton's *Rape of Europa*. It additionally features rarities from our holdings, relieving them of their obscurity in the depot, as in the cases of Joseph Werner's miniatures or James Licini's steel sculptures. In the fall of 2011 a reduced version of the exhibition will be showing in The National Gallery Oslo.

1/2

Italian Medieval Masters and Bernese Painting around 1500

Our visitors can admire early Italian masters such as Duccio, Fra Angelico, and others in the first section of the exhibition. This precious collection was bequeathed to the museum by Adolf von Stürler (cf. no. 6). The artworks are followed by altar panels that were executed around 1500. A group of unknown artists, the so called “**Nelkenmeister**” working in Basel, Zurich, and Bern around this time sign their religious paintings with two carnations - one red and the other white. **Niklaus Manuel**, the most famous Swiss Renaissance painter besides Hans Holbein the Younger, continues this tradition. As a poet and statesman he plays a pivotal role in establishing Protestantism in Bern.

In 1505, Bern’s municipal scribe Thüring Fricker commissions an altarpiece for the cathedral, the *Allerseelenaltar*. He chooses an unusual subject, which is then executed by an **unidentified master**. The painted wings to a sculpted altar piece, which was destroyed during the Reformation, depict scenes with corpses behaving as live human beings. They visualise a life between death and the last judgement as it was perceived to be at that time. Both the frightful army of skeletons seen on the inside, as well as skeletons performing mass, who would be visible when the altar was closed, reveal a fear of eternal doom and explain the ensuing habit of giving alms. With the canonisation of purgatory, a ritual of penitence is being established around 1200, which leads to an abusive system of selling indulgences and ultimately to a reformation of church practice. The depiction of skeletons celebrating the Eucharist was quite controversial at the time.

Swiss Painting from the 16th - 18th Century

It is 1528 and the iconoclasm of the Reformation is sweeping through Bern. Churches are being robbed of their decorations and artists will be facing hard times. Portraits alone can hardly make up for the lack of religious commissions. Yet the now prevailing subject mirrors the growing individualisation of society and a greater self awareness among members of the bourgeoisie. As the largest city state north of the Alps during the 16th century, Bern is flourishing. The riches of the country raise the standard of living for patrician landowners, who develop gradually into a more oligarchic, French-oriented urban aristocracy in the 17th century. From a Protestant perspective, the wealth is to be considered a “blessing of the land” Barock portraits by painters such as **Johannes Dünz** and **Emanuel Handmann** allow civic standing to be combined with the individuality of the patron. Swiss portraitists meet with great demand not only at home, but also abroad. Artists return with stylistic influences from abroad, as is also evident in certain portraits on display here. Like elsewhere, Swiss 18th century families aim to document their standing and genealogy by means of portraits. Certain estimations suggest that during this century, no less than 4'000 portraits were created in the city of Bern alone. **Joseph Werner** (1637-1710) the Bernese painter, draughtsman and engraver, enjoys great success in Paris. During those years, from 1662 to 1667, he focuses on creating miniatures. Following French courtly fashion, his small compositions deal with mythological or religious subjects, or contain allegorical scenes. Whether miniature or large painting, Werner's compositions always have a stage-like arrangement and concentrate on few protagonists.

Swiss Landscapes

It is not until Romanticism that the notion of longing is projected onto nature, which up to then was mostly perceived as a potentially threatening force. In the middle of the 18th century, Switzerland's unspoiled mountains become a favourite destination on the so-called Grand Tour through Europe. Thomas Cook is one of the first to offer organised trips from England to the Alps, and Switzerland turns into the playground of Europe. This is where the modest, nature-loving hiker meets the sophisticated health resort visitor.

Goethe's and Schiller's poetry propagate the Alpine republic in a literary manner, and landscape painters shape the postcard idyll with their picturesque souvenirs for tourists. Images of the Swiss landscape are presented internationally and contribute in shaping, with partly dramatic mountain landscapes, the cliché of the treacherous yet appealing wilderness of Switzerland. The mountain becomes the country's emblem and trademark for Swiss artists. Both natural scientific documentations as well as idealised views reveal a deep reverence for the mountains.

Caspar Wolf: A Pioneer in Alpine Landscapes

Caspar Wolf and Franz Niklaus König belong to the first and second generations of Swiss painters specializing in alpine landscapes. They represent two different approaches in the genre. Wolf is an investigative, almost scientific artist with a keen interest in geology, and König is more the innovative and business-oriented type ready to try out something new. They both aspire to the ideals described in Albrecht von Haller's 1729 didactic poem *The Alps*. The poem compares the simple life of alpine farmers in the free republic to degenerate urban society. In it we find the first mention of the "Sublime" in reference to the Alpine world.

Caspar Wolf accompanies scientists on their expeditions in still unmapped Alpine regions. Between 1774 and 1778 he produces almost two hundred mountain pictures for Abraham Wagner, a natural philosopher who lives in Bern. The hikes he goes on involved severe physical hardships and are dangerous, forcing Wolf to work in a highly reduced way. Standing before his motifs, the painter sketches small studies in gouache or oils on cardboard, adding a few explanatory notes. In his studio afterwards he uses them as the basis for paintings. These he then takes to the depicted terrain and touches them up there, adding details like the bizarre colouration of rock formations, of the ice, of foaming springs, and clouds, or analyses rare natural phenomena like the prismatic refraction of light on a waterfall. Then finally he reproduces the finished paintings, copying their outlines in prints and in coloured aquatints that become very popular.

Franz Niklaus König: Transparent Paintings

Franz Niklaus König represents another approach that fulfills the expectations of his tourist clientele. He is equally a business man and keen to experiment. As a result of revolution, coalition wars, and the French invasion in 1798, the hitherto flourishing trade of veduta painters who executed landscapes comes to a standstill. Just a year earlier König had moved to the Bernese Oberland. With moderate success he runs a guesthouse; but he makes more profit by acting as a mountain guide and publisher. From 1802 onwards, after the Peace of Amiens, tourists return in flocks to Switzerland. However, he is unable to earn a living from the few oil paintings he produces. In 1809, the economic situation forces König to return to Bern. There he discovers a new source of income involving large water-colored transparent paintings in a so-called “diaphanorama”. This comprises a display box that lights up interchangeable paintings from behind. In 1815 he opens up the “Transparency Cabinet” in his apartment in Marktgasse 41. For an admission fee curious visitors can view the one-hour light show. Especially his painterly moonlit landscapes and his alpenglow depictions – that is, paintings of unusual lighting effects resulting from refraction at sunset or sunrise – are compelling. The exhibition proves to be a great public attraction, prompting König to construct a wagon and put his pictures on show throughout Switzerland, Germany, and France. To augment the traveling diaphanorama he also sells small reproductions of the same subject matter. These reproductions are, in part, on “lithographed lithophanes,” which can be placed before a candle or a lamp to produce night pieces with a very distinctive character.

Wilhelm Tell

In 1291 at Lake Vierwaldstättersee, the people of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden conspire against Habsburg rule. Their oath, the so-called Rütlichschwur, forms the nucleus of the Swiss confederacy and its striving for independence, which solidifies over the following centuries and in 1848 results in the founding of a nation with its own federal constitution.

Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* (1804) unites the mythical legend recounting the origins of Swiss national history with the fictitious figure of the virtuous Alpine hunter Wilhelm Tell. The legendary scene in which he is to split an apple on the head of his own son with a bolt from his crossbow not only illustrates the arbitrary rule of the bailiff but also shows Tell's extraordinary skill. During the 19th century this archer carrying his crossbow evolved into the notion of a prototypical freedom fighter.

This is also how the sculptor **Rodo** depicted the most famous Swiss figure in this design for a public monument, which was never realised. A friend of Rodin, Rodo addressed the subject several times in his work. Here he shows Tell climbing dynamically, his left foot resting on a rock and dramatically stretching his right arm forward. It seems as if he is helping an imaginary person, and thus every spectator, to reach not only this summit but also to climb towards freedom.

Genre Painting

The founding of the Swiss federal state in 1848 creates a need for motifs that express the feeling of a new national identity. Besides the Alps, which represent freedom with their unbridled nature, the modest and honest farmer and craftsman too will embody the values of democracy. Scenes of everyday life are more than mere picturesque images for the homely interior, and propagate an enlightened image of a simple and honest life aimed at uniting the diversity of the various cantons.

Nonetheless, **Albert Anker**'s images reflect a developing society. 19th century genre painting, with its tendency towards realistic representation, also contains impulses that lead to modernism. Swiss artists seek their training in the then artistic centres of Europe: Paris, Munich and Düsseldorf. Like ambassadors, they spread the image of their country abroad and return to Switzerland with foreign inspirations.

Swiss Salon Art

The paintings have been hung in a way that is modelled after the Salons and world exhibitions in which Swiss artists annually participate, several of whom are female. These artists are acclaimed not only within Switzerland but also internationally – in Paris, London, Munich, Vienna, and Saint Petersburg. In foreign countries their paintings decorate the painting galleries of the higher nobility and upper middle class. In contrast to their former standing, many of the works executed by this group of artists are doomed to oblivion in museum depots. The exhibition of the collection is an excellent one-time opportunity for showing a group of works we only seldom have the chance to see.

The presentation shows several pictures in which the element of landscape only plays a secondary role. For example, **Albert de Meuron** adds the mountains in *Chamois Hunter Resting* merely as decoration, giving the composition a picturesque background. On this subject the artist writes: “Ce sont des sujets de figures combinées avec la nature suisse” – that is, “figures in combination with Swiss nature.” De Meuron borrows freely from an arsenal of popular motifs, adopting the theme of the hunter as an independent mountaineer. De Meuron’s painting can be interpreted as representing the gemsantilope huntsmen, living in harmony with nature, as the only people who know their way around this very difficult terrain. The ages of the three hunters differ, referencing the pictorial tradition of the three ages of humankind.

Academic Art: Adolf von Stürler and Karl Stauffer-Bern

Adolf von Stürler is one of the major benefactors of the Kunstmuseum Bern. It owes him not only his own pictures but also his collection of early Italian paintings (cf. no. 1) and a group of Ingres drawings. Born in Paris, Stürler was descended from an old bourgeois family from Bern. The pupil of Ingres follows his teacher's advice and travels to Italy in order to study the antique, living in Florence from 1831 to 1853. But before, the 24 year old paints his *Roman Wrestlers*, inspired by a visit to the Roman arena in Nîmes. Although not a traditional history painting, with its intricately entangled figures set against a classical background with ruins, this composition demonstrates how Stürler prepared himself for such artistic challenges.

The other works in this gallery are by **Karl Stauffer-Bern**. The three painted nudes date from his Munich Academy years (1876-80). They reveal not only his study of Old Masters like Holbein, but also his efforts to depict the human body in various modes in order to become a history painter. Despite his high ambitions, Stauffer is now mostly known as a portraitist. The young artist continues his studies in Berlin, where he also devotes himself to engraving and where he meets Adolph Menzel. Stauffer plans several history paintings but only realises *The Crucified*, here on display. Even though he breaks with an age-old visual tradition by depicting such a boyish model, a contemporary Berlin critic praises this "earnest and powerful study."

6

Symbolism

Since the middle of the 19th century, the positivism of European industrialised society is confronted with a new kind of artistic expression. Symbolism is not so much a style with formal criteria but rather an artistic attitude, and puts a face on the melancholy of the fin de siècle. Artists seek experiences beyond societal norms and tackle subjects like death and sin or suppressed urges and feelings. Both thematically as well as stylistically they look for individual solutions to express a sense of world weariness.

Swiss symbolism is defined by diversity and multi-layeredness. Its representatives orient themselves towards the artistic centres of the day: artists from western Switzerland like **Colombi** look towards Paris and Brussels; those from the German regions like **Böcklin** towards Munich and Berlin; whereas southerners like **Segantini** find their inspiration in Milan and Venice.

Ferdinand Hodler

Born in Bern in 1853, **Hodler** grows up in an impoverished environment. He moves to Geneva in 1872, after having trained as a landscape painter in Thun. He communicates the spiritual, the eternal and the cosmic in a clear visual language with rhythmical and symmetrical compositions that are inspired by Rudolf Steiner's eurhythmy (an expressive movement art). Despite a first solo exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1887, he only finds recognition abroad. After receiving a gold medal for three of his pictures at the Paris 1900 World's Exhibition, he is seen as a leading European artist. In Switzerland however, his talent is still far from being generally recognized. In 1901, at the latest possible opportunity, the canton of Bern's government barely succeeds in acquiring for the Kunstmuseum Hodler's four most important symbolist works. The artist himself considers *The Day*, *The Night*, *Eurhythmy* and *The Disappointed*, as "honorary-Hodlers, which have been acclaimed everywhere abroad." His landscapes evoke the Swiss mountains in a symbolic way and with their luminosity transpose the subject towards modernism, as if anticipating the art of Mark Rothko. During the first World War, the internationally recognized artist strongly protests against the bombing of the Reims cathedral, which causes his expulsion from all artists' organisations in Germany. Upon his death in 1918, he is proclaimed an honorary citizen of Geneva.

Neoimpressionism

“Our educators to van Gogh”

Hans Trog, 1908

The emancipation of the image to representations of light and colour by the impressionists had a long lasting influence on every succeeding generation of artists. This approach appears in different countries from the 1880s on under such terms as divisionism, post-impressionism or neo-impressionism.

Influenced by colour theory, artists pursue a dematerialisation of representationalism. The depiction of reality is freed from mere representation to become an independent configuration.

In Switzerland, the avant-garde movement looks towards the dominant figure of Ferdinand Hodler. Artists as **Cuno Amiet** and the cousins **Augusto** and **Giovanni Giacometti** (Alberto Giacometti's father) give the Swiss a taste for modernism, using glowing colours and diffused images, leaving traditional alpine scenes behind.

Paul Klee

Paul Klee (1879-1940) is a grandiose soloist in the history of classical modernism. His unique visual language is both sensitive and fragile, full of enigmatic allusions and subtle irony. He himself claimed “I cannot be grasped in the here and now”. Yet his work reveals Klee to be not only a poet, but also an astute observer of art and society, integrating these observations in his writings and images. He always keeps an intellectual distance and estranges his commentaries with playful humour and artistic fantasy.

Born to a German father and a Swiss mother near Bern, Klee received the Swiss nationality only posthumously. He is nonetheless considered one of the city’s great artists, returning there late in his life while fleeing from the Nazis. This position is underscored by the Zentrum Paul Klee, a museum dedicated to his work that opened in Bern in 2005.

Adolf Wölfli and the Surrealists

Adolf Wölfli is a pivotal representative of art brut or outsider art. He was born in Bern in 1864 and lived from 1895 onwards in the Waldau psychiatric sanatorium near Bern. Before he died in 1930 he produced an enormous oeuvre of 1460 drawings, almost 1560 collages, and 25'000 sheets he bound together into books. The psychiatrist Walter Morgenthaler discovered Wölfli's oeuvre, which represents a great remix of the world. The artist produced a gigantic vision of a future world in his *Sankt Adolf-Riesen-Schöpfung* (*Saint Adolf's Gigantic Creation*), following diverse models, ideas, and visions. Among drawing on other notions, it primarily adhered to a Christian visual and lingual worldview. He took Creation as described in the Bible and by the Church as his model. Many of his figures wear a cross on their heads, while numerous female and male companions are depicted as saints. In 1916 Wölfli declares that he is Adolf II. His visual world evidences a problematic relationship to the Church and religion. The artist views it primarily as a reservoir of powerful symbols of transcendence and glorification.

The surrealists rejected middle-class values by refusing to acknowledge logical and rational explanations of the world. They considered outsiders such as Wölfli and **Louis Soutter** – from the canton of Vaud – as having a closer affinity to the unconscious and dream world than “normal people,” and thus saw in them vital sources of inspiration for their own ideas about art. Such selective affinities manifested themselves in the works of **Alberto Giacometti**, **Le Corbusier**, **Kurt Seligmann**, **Serge Brignoni**, **Otto Tschumi**, and **Meret Oppenheim** (cf. no. 16).

The Onset of Modernity

At the beginning of the 20th century, exuberance and utopian aspirations aim at more than just artistic change. Whether in a socio-political, a religious-theosophical or a creative-artistic sense, the purpose is to change the world. The 19th century was a breeding ground for artistic revolution. Now, almost all at once, the Fauves and the Cubists shock Paris, the *Brücke*-movement is founded in Dresden, and in Munich, the members of the *Blue Rider* lead art towards abstraction. Italy proclaims Futurism, while the young Soviet Union propagates constructivist ideals.

World War I disrupts this development and shatters the dreams of renewal. In Zurich, DaDa-artists protest against the madness of war and expand upon the definition of art. After 1918 all of Europe sees a return to order. With coldness and sarcasm, a new figurative art addresses the ideals of the pre-war era. Mean while, structured artistic education at the Bauhaus still tries to spread utopian ideals in society. From the middle of the 1920s onwards, the surrealists take over from DaDa and provide a platform for the subconscious as well as for outsider art.

Kirchner and the Swiss Expressionists

After suffering from a nervous breakdown during the War, **Ludwig Kirchner** moves to Waldkirch near Davos in 1917. There he lives through another highly productive phase that have a lasting impact on Swiss expressionism. The paintings and sculptures on show in the 1923 exhibition in Basle are a revelation for **Hermann Scherer**, **Albert Müller**, and other young artists in their search for new and unconventional forms of expression. They become friends with Kirchner and follow his example. Later they found the group "Rot-Blau" in Ticino, and greatly diverge from the use of dark tones characteristic for older-generation artists. Instead they produce dynamic and hastily painted, coloured compositions based on subjective emotions. Their paintings, watercolours, drawings, woodcuts, and coloured wooden sculptures executed during the few years they have before their early deaths are palpable visual expressions of the images haunting them, divulging inner fears and feelings of being threatened. They comprise an impressive contribution to Swiss expressionism. In 2007, the Kunstmuseum Bern devoted a comprehensive exhibition to Kirchner and his followers for the first time.

Alberto Giacometti

The best known scion of the Swiss artist's family Giacometti, leaves the narrow Bergell valley as a young man and moves to Paris in 1922. There **Alberto Giacometti** (1901-1966) quickly gains fame as a surrealist sculptor (cf. no 10). Nonetheless, in 1934 he departs from his metaphorical language in search of adequate means to depict his visual experiences.

This effort raises major questions, which will preoccupy the artist throughout his life. Whether it concerns a sculpture, painting or drawing, each work reveals Giacometti's persistent quest to create a true work of art that reflects his perception of reality. His awareness that this is a doomed effort becomes an integral part of his work, to which he ascetically subjugates his entire life. In doing so he achieves legendary fame already during his lifetime.

Concrete Art

At the beginning of the 20th century, the once singular artistic centres in Europe become more connected and an intense exchange of new art occurs. A great number of alternative styles develop and set new accents, also in places other than Paris or Munich. Besides in cities like Milan (Futurism) and Weimar/Dessau (Bauhaus), new ideas originate in Leiden (De Stijl) or Zurich (DaDa). Yet it is no longer a matter of local styles that define the art of the early 20th century, but rather it is a certain mindset that shapes modernism.

The goal of Concrete Art is to free the content of an image from representation and narration and transpose it to a depiction of structure. According to Max Bill: "We call those works Concrete Art, which were created only on the basis of their own characteristics and physical nature – thus they do not refer to natural phenomena and are no transformation or abstraction thereof."

Here, Swiss artists reveal themselves as belonging to a European modernist movement, whose art stands in dialogue with that of French, German or Italian colleagues. This is an era where one speaks no longer of Swiss art, but of international modernism.

Markus Raetz Room

In 1983 the Museum of Fine Arts Bern commissioned **Markus Raetz** to transform the corner room of the Stettler building into a work of art. The only condition was that the work was to consist of removable elements.

“M”(arkus) displays a visual story meditating on perception in a way that is comparable to a waiter serving a bottle of wine to a contemplative tête-à-tête. Observers are invited to sit down and relax on one of the huge red couches – likewise designed by Raetz – and to perceive the “horizon” poetically, through the body, the spirit, and the soul. Their gazes wander over the sea they behold from the inner depths of their vision. They – in the fragile form of dry wood – attempt to reach its horizons by swimming, by flying, or by dreaming. So what? The horizon darkens, horizontal and vertical alignment is disrupted, our flight takes us to hidden hills and valleys. And in the dark of night, while soundly asleep, the artist-painter “M” commits a bloody murder. The victim is his model.

Raetz works with his paint brush and color on small panels. They often appear fragmented, which can also be said of the fragile twigs gleaned from the ground and put together, composing silhouettes of heads and bodies. In the middle of the room, on “well anchored” stands, a piece of drift-wood and a stone are afloat, suggesting a question mark – an omnipresent sign in Raetz’s work. Here, however, it appears as if it were a feature inscribed by nature.

Meret Oppenheim

Meret Oppenheim bequeathed a comprehensive legacy to the Kunstmuseum Bern, so that the museum – with 270 of her works – now disposes over the largest collection of her oeuvre. She is one of the most unconventional and visionary among Swiss artists of her time, and her multifaceted work makes a significant contribution to 20th century art. She counts as a representative of surrealism, although it is almost impossible to fathom her work thoroughly. She additionally acquired a reputation as a poet and designer. Early in the 1930s Meret Oppenheim chooses to live in Paris as a location in which she finds the necessary freedom and additional stimulation of its vibrant creative sphere. Her painting of a *Seated Figure with Folded Arms* was executed during her beginnings there. In 1936 she becomes famous practically overnight with her *Fur Cup*. However, she finds it difficult to come to terms with her early success. During a long-enduring crisis that lasts over years she continues to work but ends up destroying quite a lot of her art. Then, aged 41, she suddenly finds a way out of her predicament by studying C. G. Jung's psychology. Her sense of insecurity is manifest in the great diversity of her artistic productions. Again and again she explores the boundaries and connections between nature and culture, the opposites of night and day, of dreams and reality, of the conscious and the unconscious. In the same way she also engages with the division of roles between man and woman. The unexpected, unconventional, incomprehensible, constant mutability, variformness, and occasionally also the immaterial are characteristic elements of Oppenheim's art.

Swiss Contemporary Art

“... it seems that God had predestined the Swiss for modernism. Cleanliness, directness and the calculable – the solid aspects of the avant-garde – seem to have been part of the Swiss mentality since the creation of the Alps.”

Beat Wyss

The downside of Swiss orderliness is the existentially abysmal. Artists like **Daniel Spoerri**, **Jean Tinguely** and **Dieter Roth** reveal the Helvetian double standard. Like their Dadaist predecessors, they explore the notion of art through a process-like experiencing of reality, and transform banal even repulsive matter like waste and excrements into art. International movements such as Nouveau Réalisme, Eat Art, Fluxus and Happening, all have Swiss participants. At the same time, the 1960s witness a return to objective representation by a large number of artists who bring a new approach towards photography and painting. There is an international kinship with American Photorealism and Pop Art, which succeed abstract expressionism.

What appears to be realistic turns out to be abstract upon closer observation. Real is only the sobriety of form and line in a seemingly playful representation, as created by **Raetz** (cf. no. 15, 18). Just like the American minimalists, Swiss artists use common materials for other purposes than intended and in entirely new contexts.

The Large Stairwell Old and Contemporary

By placing exhibits in the large stairwell, architecture and contemporary art conflate to a tension-filled opposition of old and modern. The choice of the location as well as lighting influences visitors' perception. In this way visitors also understand the 1879 historical building of the Kunstmuseum — immersed in a dialogue with its collection — as an artwork. Modern in its own way, Max Buri's painting *After the Burial* from 1905 functions as a transitional element, leading us into the world of **Dieter Roth, Franz Gertsch, Markus Raetz, and Pipilotti Rist.**

One of the most recently acquired contributions owned by the museum is Rist's 1993 installation on digesting impressions (*Gastroscopy*). It shows endoscopic recordings from within a human intestinal tract, screened on a round monitor that has been put into a bathing suit. The screen's weight stretches and shapes this garment in such a way that it resembles an awkwardly shaped woman, who literally seems to have a digestive problem. Thus, the images from the innards that seem like a journey through an unknown universe, the metaphor of "digesting impressions" achieves an almost tangible dimension. The composing of objects from everyday life into a pictorial conversion of media-theoretical questions is typical for Pipilotti Rist. Her popularity can also be traced to the fact that she readily addresses "female" subjects like menstruation, beauty, emotionality or physicalness in combination with technology, which is traditionally perceived as a "male" domain.

Agenda

Öffentliche Führungen

Sonntag, 11h

3./17. April, 8./29. Mai, 26. Juni

Dienstag, 19h

5./19. April, 10./17. Mai,

14./21. Juni

Vortrag von Konrad Tobler:

**Allwelten bei Hodler, Stauffer-
Bern und Wölfli**

Aus Anlass der Publikation des
Buches *Hodler, Stauffer, Wölfli*
– eine Berner Parallelgeschichte
von Konrad Tobler im Herbst 2011

im Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess

Dienstag, 10. Mai, 20h

(im Anschluss an die öffentliche
Führung)

**Vortrag von Christiane Meyer-
Thoss: Komplizin des Traums –
Meret Oppenheims lyrischer und
bildnerischer Kosmos**

Christiane Meyer-Thoss ist
Herausgeberin und Autorin
zahlreicher Essays über die
Künstlerin. Aus Anlass der
Neuausgabe der

Traumaufzeichnungen

von Meret Oppenheim in der
Buchreihe *Moderne Klassiker*,
Bibliothek Suhrkamp, 2010

Dienstag, 14. Juni 2011, 20h

(im Anschluss an die öffentliche
Führung)

Kinderworkshop:

**Sonntagmorgen im Museum –
Die Brunnentraumwolke**

Sonntag, 10h30 – 12h

8./29. Mai, 26. Juni

Anmeldung / Info:

T 031 328 09 11 oder

vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch

Kosten: CHF 10.00

KATALOG

... Giacometti, Hodler, Klee

... Das Kunstmuseum Bern.

*Höhepunkte der Schweiz aus
sieben Jahrhunderten*, hrsg. von

Christiane Lange und Matthias
Frehner, Katalog zur Ausstellung

in der Kunsthalle der Hypo-

Kulturstiftung, München, 2010,

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Exhibition

Duration	April 1 – June 26, 2011
Opening	Thursday, March 31, 6.30 pm
Curators	Matthias Frehner, Marc-Joachim Wasmer
Texts	Roger Diederer, Christiane Lange, Karin Koschkar, Monika Schäfer, Hans Christoph von Tavel, Marc-Joachim Wasmer
Admission	CHF 14.–/red. CHF 10.–
Opening hours	Mondays closed Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 9 p.m. Wednesday - Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Good Friday , April 22, closed Easter , April 24/25, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. May 1 , 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Ascension Day , June 2, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Pentecost , June 12/13, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Guided tours	T +41 31 328 09 11, F +41 31 328 09 10 vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch
Other venues	Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung München, 17.9.2010 - 18.1.2011 The National Gallery Oslo, 30.9.2011 – 8.1.2012