

KAHNWEILER & RUPF

Press Kit
22.11.—
23.3.25

A Friendship
between Paris
and Bern

In collaboration with:

Hermann und Margrit
Rupf-Stiftung

With the support of:



Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne



Braque, Picasso, Gris: from 22 November 2024 until 23 March 2025, the exhibition *Kahnweiler & Rupf. A Friendship between Paris and Bern* at the Kunstmuseum Bern features major works by the founders of Cubism, while at the same time shedding light on the extraordinary friendship between the Parisian gallery owner Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and the Bern businessman and collector Hermann Rupf.

In Paris there was the gallery owner Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884–1979), who dealt in paintings by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Juan Gris – in Bern, the businessman Hermann Rupf (1880–1962), who sold haberdashery, buttons and elegant scarves on Waisenhausplatz. The extraordinary friendship between the two protagonists led to the creation of the Rupf collection, now in the Kunstmuseum Bern. The close contact between the two survived the most difficult circumstances. It continued even when Kahnweiler's family had to flee from Paris during the German occupation and in the wake of the anti-Semitism that it unleashed, and even had to go into hiding.

The exhibition shows paintings, drawings and sculptures from the Rupf collection, including works by Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Georges Braque, André Derain and Paul Klee. For the first time it also explores the personal correspondence between Rupf and Kahnweiler from the precarious years between 1933 and 1945, and sheds light on the collection in the context of a friendship in extraordinary times.

A friendship between Paris and Bern

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and Hermann Rupf first met while studying in Frankfurt. In their free time they discovered their shared passion for art, which would endure throughout their lifetimes. While Rupf worked as a businessman in Bern from 1905 onwards, Kahnweiler opened an art gallery in Paris in 1907 – the first collector was Rupf. Kahnweiler's gallery soon made a name for itself with representatives of Cubism such as Picasso and Braque, whose works also made their way into the Rupf collection from the very start.

The connection between the two friends was not restricted to the field of art, however: when World War I broke out in 1914, Hermann Rupf invited his friend to join him in Bern. Kahnweiler who, as a German citizen, was no longer allowed to keep running his gallery in Paris, accepted the invitation and stayed in Switzerland during the war years. That close friendship, and the constant dialogue that the two men had about art led over the years to the creation of a unique and top-class collection.

Masterpieces of modern art

First coming into being in 1907, the Rupf collection provides a special perspective on modern art. In a unique way, it reflects the beginnings of the artistic avant-garde, and particularly the history of Cubism. By the beginning of World War I in 1914, Rupf had already been able to buy a select group of 30 art works from Kahnweiler. Alongside works by the Fauves, they included paintings by Picasso and Braque, which are now considered as being among the icons of Cubism. In the 1920s works by Fernand Léger and a representative group of paintings by the Cubist Juan Gris, who died at a young age, reached Rupf via Kahnweiler. This large group of works by Gris is among the focuses of the collection. Another focal point lies in the works of Paul Klee, including the famous *Niesen* watercolour (1915). Thanks to Rupf, Kahnweiler made Klee's acquaintance during his time in Bern, even becoming his sole agent in 1934. The outlawing of modern art and the persecution of modern artists by the Nazis also made its mark on the art market Switzerland. In 1939 the notorious auction of so-called "Degenerate Art" from German museum collections was held in Lucerne, the proceeds going to the German regime. In the post-auction sale, despite misgivings, Rupf bought August Macke's painting *Gartenrestaurant* (1912).

Previously unpublished letters

"If the war lasts for several years, life must still go on relatively normally at the same time"

Rupf to Kahnweiler, 27.4.1940

"We are living through crucial times. The fate of our civilization, our world, indeed of us all, is in the balance. I still maintain complete trust."

Kahnweiler to Rupf, 27.5.1940

Kahnweiler wrote these words to Rupf on 27 May 1940, after the German Wehrmacht had quickly advanced towards Paris. Shortly before the occupation of Paris, in June 1940 Kahnweiler was able to flee with his wife Lucie to Limousin, to the as yet unoccupied South of France. From there, Rupf received some 40 long and often very personal letters which are being published for the first time in the context of the exhibition. So as not to attract attention, they were written in French, and deal not with politics, but with life in the country, the emigration of friends, fears and illnesses – and an intense engagement with questions of art. In his place of refuge, Kahnweiler particularly devoted his time to Juan Gris, about whom he wrote a seminal monograph that was published shortly after the war. In retrospect he summed up this time with a notable paradox: 'paradise in the shadow of the crematoria'.

The correspondence between Kahnweiler and Rupf broke off abruptly in August 1943. Persecuted as a Jew, Kahnweiler narrowly escaped arrest by the Gestapo, and was forced into hiding. He was not heard from again until he sent a letter from Paris on 16 December 1944.

As well as the outstanding art works from the Rupf collection, the exhibition makes this correspondence between the two friends visible, and audible with an audio station. This provides both a new insight into the life and thought of one of the greatest art dealers of his time, but also a touching portrait of a deep and lifelong friendship.

Opening

The opening of the exhibition will take place on

Thursday, 21 November 2024 from 18:30.

Admission to the exhibition is free on this evening.

Curators

Susanne Friedli and Konrad Tobler

Assistant Curator

Christopher Kilchenmann

An exhibition by

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung

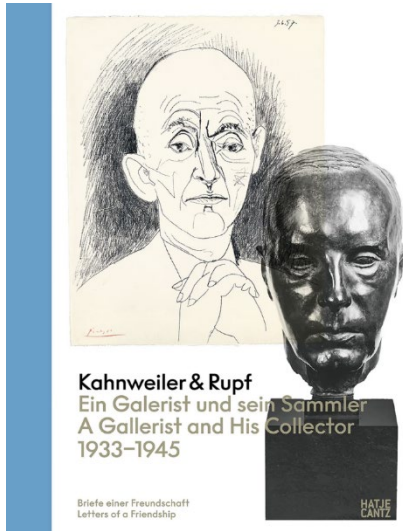
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Media preview

We cordially invite you to the media preview with curators Susanne Friedli and Konrad Tobler on **Wednesday, 20 November 2024 at 10:00 at the Kunstmuseum Bern.**

Please register via press@kunstmuseumbern.ch.



Catalogue

Kahnweiler & Rupf. A Gallerist and His Collector, 1933-1945

Published by Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung

With contributions by Michael Baumgartner, Susanne Friedli, Peter Kropmanns, Luise Mahler, Konrad Tobler, Nina Zimmer and Stefan Zweifel

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Digital Guide

There is a freely accessible Digital Guide to accompany the exhibition. It can be accessed from Wednesday, 20 November 2024 via QR code or guide.kunstmuseumbern.ch/en/kahnweiler-rupf.



From left to right: Margrit Rupf-Wirz, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Renée Wirz (later Ziegler) and Hermann Rupf in Mürren, around 1950

Chronology of a Friendship

1880

Hermann Rupf was born in Bern.

1884

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler was born in Mannheim.

1901

Rupf und Kahnweiler met as trainees at a bank in Frankfurt and became “inseparable.”

1903

Rupf und Kahnweiler shared an apartment in Paris and attended cultural events together.

1904

Kahnweiler und Lucie Godon became a couple; their family included Godon’s daughter Louise.

1905

Rupf joined his brother-in-law Ruedi Hossmann’s haberdashery business in Bern, which from 1908 was renamed Hossmann & Rupf.

1907

Kahnweiler opened a small gallery at 28 Rue Vignon in Paris. His exhibition program consisted of avant-garde art. Rupf made his first purchases from Kahnweiler.

1910

Rupf invested 10'000 francs as a limited partner in Kahnweiler’s gallery. He married Margrit Wirz, one of his store’s employees.

1912

Klee visited Kahnweiler in Paris and Rupf in Bern.

1914

When the First World War broke out, Kahnweiler was on a trip to Italy. Rupf invited him to Bern and offered him financial help.

Kahnweiler stayed in Bern until May 1920. His art collection was confiscated by the French state because he was considered an “enemy alien.”

1919

Lucie Godon and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler were married in Bern. Hermann and Margrit Rupf were witnesses.

1920

On 1 September, together with André Simon, Kahnweiler opened Galerie Simon in Paris at 29 Rue d’Astorg.

Rupf bought his friend a house in Paris-Boulogne for 48'000 francs.

1921-1923

Kahnweiler’s collection went to compulsory auction after being confiscated by the French state. A syndicate, which Rupf was a member of, was only able to buy back a small number of works.

From 1929

The art business in general became existentially threatened by the global economic crisis. As a result, Kahnweiler complained repeatedly, and sometimes in great detail, in letters to Rupf about the poor business situation – to the point of considering giving up the gallery (1934).

1933

On 30 January Hitler was appointed German Chancellor. This led to the first waves of arrests of political opponents and large-scale riots against Jews.

The great emigration from Germany began. The gallery owner Alfred Flechtheim and Kahnweiler's brother Gustav also fled with his wife Elly.

With Rupf acting as intermediary, Kahnweiler began representing Paul Klee.

Rupf helped Kahnweiler to import a large group of paintings from Germany to Switzerland, bringing them to safety.

1935

Paul Klee exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern.

1936

In France, the socialist Front populaire under Léon Blum won a majority in the election. Kahnweiler and Rupf welcomed the change and discussed anti-Semitism in depth in their correspondence.

1937

On 25 May the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* opened in Paris. In the Spanish pavilion, Picasso exhibited the monumental painting *Guernica* denouncing the terror attack by German aircraft on the Basque town of Guernica.

Rupf visited the exhibition in September and met Kahnweiler.

On 19 July, the propaganda exhibition *Entartete "Kunst"* (Degenerate "Art") opened in Munich, defaming modern art.

Kahnweiler became a French citizen.

1939

Cubism exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern, including numerous loans from Kahnweiler and Rupf.

On 30 June an auction of "degenerate" art took place at the Fischer Gallery in Lucerne. Kahnweiler and Rupf hesitated to take part. Rupf bought Macke's painting *Gartenrestaurant* (Garden Restaurant, 1912) and Mataré's sculpture *Liegende Kuh* (Lying Cow, 1925).

Kahnweiler and Rupf met for the last time before the outbreak of World War II.

On 1 September the German military invaded Poland, beginning World War II.

From then on Kahnweiler wrote his letters in French so as not to make himself once again conspicuous as an "enemy alien." Rupf likewise replied in French.

1940

On 14 June the German military occupied Paris.

A few days earlier, Lucie and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler had fled to Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat in Limousin. Kahnweiler had already been moving important works of art there for their safety since 1939.

The truce of June 22 divided France into a German-occupied zone and a "free" zone in the south. It was there that Maréchal Pétain established the authoritarian "État français," which continued to enforce anti-Semitic legislation.

Despite censorship, the correspondence with Rupf was not interrupted until August 1943.

1941

During the summer Galerie Simon became threatened with "Aryanization." Employing her exceptional negotiating skills, Kahnweiler's stepdaughter Louise Leiris-Godon was able to save the gallery by having it transferred to her name.

Kahnweiler's French citizenship was revoked.

Kahnweiler continued to work on his book about Juan Gris but missed Rupf's critical input.

1942

State measures against Jewish people, including arrests and deportations, also began to greatly increase in France.

1943

At the beginning of September, Kahnweiler narrowly escaped arrest by the Gestapo. He and Lucie went into hiding under a false name in the village of Lagupie in southwest France until September 1944.

Rupf requested that the Red Cross search for Kahnweiler. At the end of 1943, he receives news that he was still alive.

1944

On 16 December Rupf received his first card from Kahnweiler. He had been living in Paris again since its liberation by the Allies in late summer.

1945

On 8 May the war ended in Europe.

On 15 May Lucie Kahnweiler died following a long illness.

The friendship continued. Kahnweiler remained an important promoter of Cubism and dealer in Picasso's art.

1954

The Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation was established.

1961

Magrit Rupf-Wirz died.

1962

Death of Hermann Rupf.

1979

Death of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler.

The Hossmann & Rupf business was liquidated.

Press images

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01

Juan Gris

Portrait de la femme de l'artiste [Portrait de Josette Gris], 1916

Oil on wood

55 x 46 x 0,7 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern



02

Pablo Picasso

Tête de jeune fille, 1929

Oil on canvas

61 x 38 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern

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03

Georges Braque

Maisons à l'Estaque, 1908

Oil on canvas

73 x 59,5 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern

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04

Paul Klee

Der Niesen, 1915

Watercolor and pencil on paper on cardboard
17,7 x 26 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern



05

Fernand Léger

Contrastes de formes, 1913

Oil on canvas

55 x 46 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern

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06

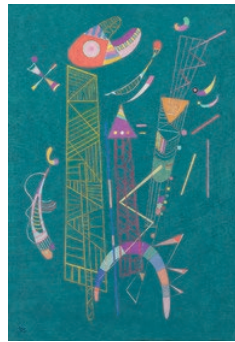
Juan Gris

Le livre ouvert, 1925

Oil on canvas

73,2 x 92,2 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern



07

Wassily Kandinsky

Construction légère, 1940

Oil on canvas

72,5 x 50 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern



08

August Macke

Gartenrestaurant, 1912

Oil on canvas

81 x 105 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung,
Kunstmuseum Bern



09

From left to right: Margrit Rupf-Wirz,
Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Renée Wirz (later
Ziegler) and Hermann Rupf in Müren,
around 1950



10

Hermann and Margrit Rupf in their apartment at
Brückfeldstrasse 27 in Bern, around 1955
Photo: Kurt Blum

Current and upcoming exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Bern

Chaïm Soutine. Against the Current
until 1 December 2024

Amy Sillman. Oh, Clock!
until 2 February 2025

Kunstmuseum Bern of the future. The architectural competition
until 23 March 2025

Marisa Merz. Listen to the Space
31.1.-1.6.2025

Carol Rama. Rebel of Modernism
7.3.-13.7.2025

Opening hours

Tuesday
10:00–20:00

Wednesday–Sunday
10:00–17:00

Monday closed

Contact

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