

**FUTURE PRESENT****Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation****Contemporary Art from Classic Modernism to the Present Day****13 June 2015 to 31 January 2016****Press Release**

**For the exhibition FUTURE PRESENT, Schaulager has organised the first extensive overview of the collection of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation in over 30 years. Established in 1933, the Basel Foundation is devoted to collecting and presenting art of its time and, as such, maintains one of the most important ongoing collections of modern and contemporary art in Switzerland. Thoughtfully selected works of the collection, ranging from Classic Modernism to contemporary art, will be on view in over 5000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space.**

The Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, domiciled in Basel, has been committed to the field of contemporary art for more than 80 years and continues to collect art in the spirit of the credo set forth in the founding Deed of 1933, which calls for 'embracing the present' and 'believing in the future'.

In 1941, the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation entrusted its collection on permanent loan to the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel in order to fulfil the Foundation's declared goal of making works of art accessible to a wide public. Since then, works from the holdings of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation have regularly been on view at the Kunstmuseum Basel or the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, and have become great favourites among art lovers. The Kunstmuseum's temporary closure for renovations this year offers an opportunity to show part of the collection as a self-contained and concerted whole in the exhibition FUTURE PRESENT at Schaulager. Having started out in the 1930s with acquisitions that included a now much acclaimed group of works by Flemish Expressionists, the collection currently comprises over 1000 works by some 160 artists, working in a diversity of media from paintings, sculpture and drawings to photography, video and film installations.

The Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation was established in 1933 by Maja Hoffmann-Stehlin (later Maja Sacher-Stehlin) in memory of her deceased husband Emanuel Hoffmann. The couple had begun collecting contemporary art in Brussels, where Emanuel Hoffmann was in charge of the subsidiary of his father's pharmaceutical company, Hoffmann-La Roche. On his return to Basel, Emanuel Hoffmann was appointed vice director of the company's headquarters and, from 1931, he explicitly fostered contemporary art as president of the Basel Kunstverein. It was after his tragic death at the age of 36 in an automobile accident that Maja Hoffmann-Stehlin established the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation. The decision was motivated by the unwavering belief in the importance of engaging with the contemporary art of one's own time that had formed such a strong bond between her and her husband. The uncompromising commitment to contemporary art is clearly anchored in

the Deed: works are to be acquired ‘by artists whose means of expression are forward-looking and not yet generally understood by their own time’. This conscious view to the future is all the more astonishing in a time marked by political and economic instability.

With an unerring eye for significant art, Maja Sacher-Stehlin collected works from her contemporaries – among them Hans Arp, Max Ernst, Robert Delaunay, Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí and Piet Mondrian – which have since become classics. One of her greatest qualities was an unquenchable interest in everything new and unknown, which did not fade as she grew older. Thus, works were added to the collection not only by the influential artist Joseph Beuys but also by Fred Sandback, Richard Tuttle and Mario Merz, acquired through Harald Szeemann’s legendary exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969 ‘When Attitudes Become Form’. The works of Bruce Nauman, the first ones acquired by the Foundation 40 years ago, are of undiminished pioneering relevance. In the 1970s and 1980s, works were purchased by John Baldessari, Richard Artschwager, Peter Fischli/David Weiss and large-scale paintings by Francesco Clemente, Julian Schnabel, Martin Disler and Ilya Kabakov. Highlights of the works collected in the 1990s include large-format photographs and installations of films and videos, by such artists as Jeff Wall, Cindy Sherman, Thomas Ruff, Gary Hill and Bill Viola. More recent acquisitions of works by Matthew Barney, Robert Gober, Katharina Fritsch, David Claerbout, Tacita Dean, Anri Sala, Elizabeth Peyton, Thomas Demand, Steve McQueen, Mark Wallinger, Toba Khedoori and Paul Chan testify to the forward-looking approach that continues to motivate the Foundation’s acquisitions.

In the last two decades, the collection of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation has grown considerably under the aegis of its third president and granddaughter of the founder, Maja Oeri. The first part of *FUTURE PRESENT* is chronologically arranged. The second part concentrates in particular on groups of works by individual artists, who represent the most recent acquisitions. Large-scale installations have been mounted in other areas of Schaulager. In addition works belonging to the Foundation have been permanently installed in public spaces in and around Basel. The exhibition comprises some 300 works by about 80 artists and includes many video and film installations. *FUTURE PRESENT* demonstrates the single-minded, long-term commitment to building the collection of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, reveals special concerns that have influenced the collecting and testifies to the often wilful decisions made in pursuing further developments.

A new catalogue of the collection has been published by the Laurenz Foundation in conjunction with the exhibition. The meticulously researched book contains a complete, illustrated list of works, over 80 descriptions of specific works as well as short biographies of all the artists represented in the collection. An essay by Ralph Ubl, Chair of Art History at the University of Basel, and a conversation between art historian Catherine Hürzeler and the Foundation’s current president Maja Oeri offer insight into the history of the Foundation and its collection. The catalogue is published in a German and English edition.



The exhibition has been designed by Heidi Naef, Senior Curator, and implemented by the team at Schaulager. The catalogue of the collection was conceived and produced by Schaulager.

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