

## History of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation

The Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation was established in 1933 by Maja Hoffmann-Stehlin (1896 – 1989), later Maja Sacher-Stehlin, in memory of her recently deceased husband and to perpetuate the couple's shared commitment to contemporary art. From the outset, the Foundation had three clearly defined objectives: the collection, conservation and public display of art with an uncompromising orientation towards the future.

*'The Foundation's funds are to be used to purchase works by artists whose means of expression are forward-looking and not yet generally understood by their own time – regardless of the artist's nationality and material circumstances, solely on the basis of the artistic quality of the work in the context of these new means of expression.'*<sup>1</sup>

Since its inception, the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation – under the careful eye of the founding family, now in its third generation – has consistently pursued its progressive aim of supporting contemporary art and making it available to the general public. In 2003, the Foundation's collection became the heart of Schaulager.



Exhibition view, FUTURE PRESENT, 2015–2016, Andy Warhol, *Maja (Maja Sacher-Stehlin)*, 1980  
Silkscreen on acrylic on primed canvas, 101.5 × 101.5 cm, Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, on permanent loan  
to the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, photo: Tom Bisig, Basel.

<sup>1</sup> From the Deeds of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation.



Emanuel Hoffmann (1896 – 1932)

### The origins of the collection

Emanuel Hoffmann (1896 – 1932) and Maja Hoffmann-Stehlin began in the 1920s to build up a private collection of contemporary art. Their enthusiasm was fostered by travel, especially to Paris and Brussels, where they established contacts with the avant-garde art world and made their first purchases of works by artists they had befriended.<sup>2</sup> Emanuel Hoffmann's rapid rise to prominence in the cultural life of Basel was sealed in 1932 by his election as President of the Kunstverein.<sup>3</sup> The following year, however, he died, at the age of only 36, as the result of injuries sustained in a road accident. This tragic circumstance led to the creation of the Foundation that bears his name. Maja Hoffmann-Stehlin describes its central objective as follows:

*'In memory of my husband, I hereby establish a foundation to be known as the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation in accordance with the regulations of the Swiss Civil Code, to be domiciled in Basel. The Foundation is being set up in order to continue, in some way, my husband's most important activity.'*<sup>4</sup>



Maja Hoffmann-Stehlin  
later Maja Sacher-Stehlin (1896 – 1989)

<sup>2</sup> Emanuel Hoffmann studied law in Basel and Bern and worked, after taking his doctorate, in the chemical and pharmaceutical company founded by his father, Fritz Hoffmann-La Roche. In 1921 he married Maja (Marie-Anne) Stehlin, from a Basel family of architects, who studied sculpture in Munich and began an apprenticeship with Antoine Bourdelle in Paris. After their marriage, the couple lived, with their three children, in major European cities including Paris and Brussels, where, from 1925, Emanuel Hoffmann managed the Belgian branch of the family firm, F. Hoffmann-La Roche AG.

<sup>3</sup> In 1930 the family returned to Basel, where Emanuel Hoffmann worked as deputy director at the Hoffmann-La Roche headquarters. In the same year he became a member of the Board of the Basel Kunstverein, before being elected its President in 1932.

<sup>4</sup> From the Deeds of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation.



Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart  
Photo: Julian Salinas, Basel

### **The Kunstmuseum Basel**

In 1941, in accordance with the Foundation's aim of making contemporary art accessible to a wide community, the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation and the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel concluded a permanent loan agreement that proved greatly beneficial to both partners and whose fruitful effects have persisted to this day.<sup>5</sup> The Öffentliche Kunstsammlung has the freedom 'to exhibit only a part of the loans, based on the available space and its aesthetic preferences' and 'to combine them appropriately with its own collections.'<sup>6</sup>

Over the years, the Foundation and the Kunstmuseum Basel have been partners in establishing and building up a collection of contemporary art.

While continuously pursuing its collecting activities, the Foundation also began to think about the space requirements involved: an issue which, especially in dealing with large-format installations, was becoming increasingly acute. In 1980, Maja Sacher-Stehlin initiated and facilitated the construction of one of the world's first dedicated museums of contemporary art, the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, now known as the Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart.

### **Works of the collection**

After more than 80 years of collecting contemporary art, the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation holds paintings, sculptures, installations, video works and films by over 150 artists. Many of the works that entered the collection early on – such as those by Robert Delaunay, Paul Klee, Max Ernst or Hans Arp – now rank among the classics of Modernism. Groups of exceptional works by Joseph Beuys and Bruce Nauman, acquired in the 1960s and 1970s, have since established their place in the history of art and become recognised for their groundbreaking significance. With its acquisitions of contemporary art, the Foundation continues to stake out new territory and extend the boundaries of innovation – upholding the original founding principle from 1933 of 'confidence in the future'. The latest additions to the collection include works by Jeff Wall, Tacita Dean, David Claerbout, Andrea Zittel, Steve McQueen and Toba Khedoori.

<sup>5</sup> The initiative, launched in 1926, to construct a new building for the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel had a dual aim: to rehouse the existing collection of Old Masters, and also to establish a gallery of modern art, although the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung so far lacked a modern collection. See Geelhaar, 1996, *Kunstmuseum Basel*, p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> From the agreement with the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel.

The Foundation is still following its policy of acquiring art that looks firmly to the future. The endowment capital makes it possible for the independent Foundation Board to carry on extending the collection – which is now so extensive that only a small part of the holdings can be exhibited in the Kunstmuseum Basel.

### **Schaulager and the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation**

Since 2003, the works held by the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation have been accommodated at Schaulager in Basel, where they are in open storage, instead of being packed away in crates. This means that they are continually visible and accessible to scholars and restorers. With this unusual concept, combining the functions of storeroom and exhibition space, Schaulager is a place where due consideration can be given to the special requirements and needs of art in the 21st century. As an institution that breaks new ground in addressing contemporary art, it exactly reflects Maja Sacher-Stehlin's original intentions. Schaulager was made possible by the Laurenz Foundation, set up in 1999, which finances the building and its upkeep.

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#### **Further reading**

*FUTURE PRESENT magazine*

ed. Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager Basel, Basel: Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, 2015.

*FUTURE PRESENT. The Collection of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation*

ed. Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager Basel, Basel: Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, 2015.

*Schaulager: Preserve, Study, Share.*

ed. Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager Basel, Basel: Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, 2012.

*Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation: Work Groups and Installations*

Museum für Gegenwartskunst and Schaulager, Basel: Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 2006.

*Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel. 20. Jahrhundert*, Kunstmuseum Basel, 1997.

*Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung*, Basel: Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung, 1997.

Christian Geelhaar, *Kunstmuseum Basel. Die Geschichte der Gemäldesammlung und eine Auswahl von 250 Meisterwerken*, Kunstmuseum Basel, 1996.

*Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung Basel*

Basel: Museum für Gegenwartskunst and Wiese Verlag, 1991.

Christian Geelhaar, *Bejahung der Gegenwart und Zuversicht auf die Zukunft. Zur Geschichte der*

*Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung*, in: *Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung Basel*, Basel: Museum für Gegenwartskunst and Wiese Verlag, 1991, pp. 9–33.

*Die Geschichte des Basler Kunstvereins und der Kunsthalle Basel: 1839–1988: 150 Jahre zwischen vaterländischer Kunstpflege und modernen Ausstellungen*, Basler Kunstverein, Basel: Kunsthalle, 1989.

Erika Billeter, *Leben mit Zeitgenossen. Die Sammlung der Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung*,

Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung, Bern: Benteli, 1980.

*Die Sammlung der Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung*, Basel: Kunstmuseum Basel and Zbinden Druck und Verlag, 1970.

*Zwanzig Jahre Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung 1933–1953*, Kunstmuseum Basel, 1953.

*Gedächtnisausstellung. Sammlung E. Hoffmann*, Kunsthalle Basel, 1932.