

Media release
Zurich, 23 June 2023

In autumn 2023, the Kunsthaus Zürich is launching a new exhibition of the Emil Bührle Collection

The new presentation, which opens on 3 November and is scheduled to run for at least a year, is entitled 'A Future for the Past. The Bührle Collection: Art, Context, War and Conflict'. The exhibition examines the historical context of the genesis of the Emil Bührle Collection, and adopts a nuanced approach to it in the immediate present. Differing interpretations and perspectives will be juxtaposed in order to highlight the manifold interconnections and dilemmas involved.

The Emil Bührle Collection, which has been on long-term loan to the Kunsthaus Zürich since autumn 2021, and consists of art works ranging from Dutch Old Masters to Manet, Van Gogh and Modigliani, has attracted considerable controversy, with debate centring around provenance research, former 'looted art', 'cultural property confiscated as a result of Nazi persecution', the relationship between Emil Georg Bührle and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, as well as Switzerland's position in the Second World War.

THE SOCIETAL ROLE OF THE KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

'A museum such as ours has a societal role to play that goes beyond the confines of art', explains Ann Demeester, Director of the Kunsthaus Zürich. 'I believe that in challenging times especially, we have much to offer, giving people critical food for thought while conveying positive and future-oriented messages. We do not want to shy away from controversial issues. For that reason, we believe it is important that we develop a new approach to the Bührle Collection in dialogue with an array of partners: one in which critical inquiry sparks curiosity and in which history is connected to the present day.'

NEW PRESENTATION EMBRACES MULTIPLE VOICES AND DIALOGUE

Following the initial presentation, which the Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection curated in its capacity as owner and which set out to provide a complete overview of the collection, the Kunsthaus Zürich can now take over the task of curating the private long-term loan itself. In tandem with her team, Director Ann Demeester

initiated a new exhibition intended to present the Emil Bührle Collection within a broader socio-political context.

MUCH MORE THAN AN EXHIBITION, INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

The exhibition is designed to create space for reflection and an active dialogue with the public, and intends to show how history and art history are interwoven at a fundamental level. It will simultaneously address the current debate in Switzerland surrounding provenance research and just and fair solutions for dealing with cultural property confiscated as a result of Nazi persecution, as well as the decades-long ties between the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft (the patron association of the Kunsthaus Zürich) and Emil Bührle.

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY PANEL AND MIXED TEAM

Reflecting these aims, the exhibition team headed by Kunsthaus Director Ann Demeester and collection curator Dr Philippe Büttner is interdisciplinary in its make-up. It includes art historians Franziska Lentzsch (project manager responsible for implementation), Ioana Jimborean (in charge of the resonance space and exhibition design), provenance researcher Joachim Sieber and head of art education Dr Sibyl Kraft. The Kunsthaus is supported by a dynamic advisory panel of experts from various disciplines, who bring their diverse critical voices to bear in the preparations. The scientific body's members are Dr Nikola Doll, head of provenance research at the Kunstmuseum Bern; Muriel Gerstner, stage designer and board member of Omanut – Forum for Jewish Art and Culture; Prof. Sarah Kenderdine, Head of the Laboratory for Experimental Museology and EPFL Pavilions at the University of Lausanne; Prof. Matthieu Leimgruber, Associate Professor of Modern History at the University of Zurich; Assistant Prof. Stefanie Mahrer, SNSF PRIMA Professor of Modern European, Swiss and Jewish History; Thomas Meyer, writer; and Prof. Angeli Sachs, former head of Curatorial Studies at the Zurich University of the Arts. In addition, the Kunsthaus will continue discussions with other individuals and groups to gather varying opinions on the exhibition concept. The agency Stillhart Konzept is responsible for the exhibition design.

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND PUBLICATION

Communication with the public within the exhibition will take place at a number of levels, designed to appeal to and be understood by everyone from experts to laypeople. Events planned for spring 2024 include guided tours as well as an international conference in cooperation with the Museum Rietberg and the Swiss National Museum, on how museums should meaningfully present and mediate complex and conflict-laden histories, which will take place from 29 February until 1 March 2024. The new presentation of the Emil Bührle Collection will be accompanied by a publication exploring works that are especially relevant to the issues of 'art, context, war and conflict'. It will focus in particular on the fates of

the (Jewish) collectors who owned the discussed paintings before Emil Bührle acquired them.

TEMPORARY CLOSURE DUE TO INSTALLATION

The Emil Bührle Collection on the second floor of the Chipperfield building will be closed from 5 September to 3 November while the exhibition is being installed. Public and private guided tours will continue to take place prior to the closure and after the new exhibition opens.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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INVITATION TO THE MEDIA BRIEFING AND CONTACT FOR EDITORS

The media preview, with contributions from Director Ann Demeester and the core team, will take place at 11 a.m. on 2 November in the Chipperfield building, Heimplatz 5 (doors open and opportunity to preview the exhibition at 10 a.m.). This media release and illustrations are available for download at www.kunsthhaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/.

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