



KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

—

**THE COLLECTION
IN A NEW LIGHT**

SCHEIDEGGER & SPIESS

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Passage to the extension

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View of Heimplatz

ART AND WAR: BASELITZ, MUNCH, DENIS



A large room on the second floor of the Moser building is dominated by the works of Edvard Munch (1863–1944) and Georg Baselitz (b. 1938). The latter's monumental, coarsely worked relief series "45", which references the destruction of Dresden in 1945, hangs alongside Marc Chagall's (1887–1985) *The Martyr* from 1940. This picture evokes a pogrom directed at the Jewish population of a Russian town and shows the artist himself as a Christlike figure of suffering. Baselitz's large painting *Supper in Dresden* (1983), suggestive of a riotous feast, depicts the 'Brücke' group of Expressionist artists around Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. The figure in the centre, its mouth wide open, immediately puts us in mind of Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. Munch influenced Baselitz, who is regarded as a pivotal figure in the new Expressionist art, more than the 'Brücke' artists. The paintings from the Kunsthaus's Munch collection, some of which are also linked in a special way to the period of fascism and the Second World War, establish a direct connection between the two artists' works.

Acquisitions in context – provenance research

Linked to these groups of works, an adjoining space examines the contexts in which acquisitions were made during the Nazi period, through two examples from the Kunsthaus's own collection. It sheds light on the Munch paintings from the collection of the Berlin art historian and collector Curt Glaser (1879–1943) which came to Switzerland as flight assets, and on the purchase of two Renoir paintings which arrived at the Kunsthaus from occupied Paris via Galerie Fischer in Lucerne.

Provenance has now become a topic for art itself: an intervention in the centre of the room by the French artist Raphaël Denis (b. 1979) addresses the plundering of Jewish art collections in Paris during the Second World War (see p. 76).

Moser building,
works by Georg Baselitz

Following spread
Moser building,
works by Edvard Munch
and Georg Baselitz



Small text label below the painting of the girl.





Moser building,
works by Edvard Munch
and Georg Baselitz

Curt Glaser, Edvard Munch and the Kunsthaus Zürich

Curt Glaser was an art historian of Jewish origin living in Berlin and an important collector, not least of works by Edvard Munch, whom he knew personally. After the first Munch exhibition at the Kunsthaus in 1922, Glaser began an enduring association with the museum's then Director, Wilhelm Wartmann. Following the Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933, Glaser and his wife emigrated to Switzerland, and from 1935 they were able, through their connections to Wartmann, to deposit a number of works at the Kunsthaus, including some Munchs. In 1939 Glaser secured the return of Munch's key work *Music on the Karl Johan Street* (1889), which he had donated to Berlin's Nationalgalerie before the Nazis came to power, citing the gallery's failure to display it as agreed, and had it brought on loan to Zurich. Two years later it was acquired by the Kunsthaus when the Glasers moved to the US – finally coming 'to rest in a place worthy of it' as Glaser had wished. In 1943 and 1946, the Kunsthaus acquired three more works from Curt Glaser and Maria Glaser-Ash, his second wife.

Renoir for Baselitz – a Franco-German acquisition story

In 1990 the Kunsthaus Zürich decided to sell two paintings by Pierre-Auguste Renoir that were not of central importance to its collection, in order to acquire Georg Baselitz's "45". One of the two Renoirs had been purchased in 1943 via the art dealer Fritz Nathan from Galerie Fischer in Lucerne. Recent research has shown that it was owned by the Jewish art collector Marcel Kapferer (1872–1966) until 1941. The latter had it brought to a place of safety, along with the holdings of Galerie Wildenstein, to keep it out of the clutches of the Nazis. In April 1941 it was returned to Paris by the representative of the 'aryanized' Galerie Wildenstein, Roger Dequoy, and then sold to Galerie Fischer. It has not yet been conclusively established whether he was legally entitled to do this.



A work by Raphaël Denis
in the Moser building

Provenance as a theme for art: Raphaël Denis

The French artist Raphaël Denis has been working on the theme of looted art for some years. The installation at the Kunsthaus Zürich references the transactions between the art dealer Gustav Rochlitz and Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring after Paris was occupied by the German army in June 1940. Rochlitz had close contacts to the notorious Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce (ERR), an organization set up by the Nazi party to loot cultural property from the countries occupied during the Second World War. Works appropriated from their owners by the ERR were exchanged via Rochlitz for mostly older objects that Hermann Göring wanted for his private collection.

Most of the looted artworks documented here were returned to their former owners after the war. Many ended up in important collections such as the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Four works from the collection of Emil Bührle are also involved: *Irène Cahen d'Anvers (Little Irene)* (1880) by Renoir was returned in 1946; Bührle acquired it in 1949. Bührle was himself obliged to return Degas's *Madame Camus at the Piano* (1869) in 1948. Having acquired it from Galerie Fischer in Lucerne in 1942, he handed it back to its owner and purchased it a second time in 1951. Both works are on display in the Emil Bührle Collection galleries in the extension. 1948 also saw Bührle compelled to return a painting by Henri Matisse, *Odalisque with Tambourine* (1926), which he had purchased in 1942 from Galerie Aktuaryus in Zurich. He did not reacquire this work, and it is now in the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California. Similarly, he did not repurchase Pablo Picasso's painting *At the Races in Auteuil* (1901), which he had bought from Juvet in Lausanne in 1944 and which was returned to its rightful owner Alfred Lindon in 1948.

Joachim Sieber and Philippe Büttner

Moser building,
works by Edvard Munch
and Raphaël Denis

