

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on November 11, 2016

The Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf

The Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf

- Dates: November 11, 2016, to April 23, 2017
 - Curators: Susanne Friedli, Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation, and Petra Joos, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
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- **Hardly any time went by between the creation of works by artists like Picasso, Braque, and Derain and their acquisition by Hermann Rupf, who was personally involved with these artists at the beginning of their careers.**
 - **The Rupfs were close friends with artists like Vasily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, who gave Hermann and Margrit Rupf dedicated works on important occasions like birthdays and Christmas.**
 - **Even today, the Rupf Foundation strives to expand the collection with the most recent contemporary art without losing sight of the core of the art collection that the couple amassed over their lifetime.**
 - **This is the first time that this collection, consisting of an extensive selection of works rendered between 1907 and 2016, is travelling to Spain.**

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is presenting *The Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf*. This exhibition brings together 70 works by key artists in the history of art during the first half of the 20th century, including Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Paul Klee, and Vasily Kandinsky, in dialogue with works by contemporary artists dating from the second half of the 20th century until today. In 1963, one year after the death of Hermann Rupf, the Foundation managed to purchase Henri Laurens's 1918 work *Fruit Bowl and Pipe (Compotier et pipe)* to complete its already extensive group of sculptures and works on paper by this artist. In 1964, a relief by Hans Arp was purchased (Gallery 307).

In the 1990's, the existing collection was expanded with works by American artists as Donald Judd (Gallery 307), Joseph Kosuth, Brice Marden, Ad Reinhard, and James Turrell, and European artists as Piero Manzoni (Gallery 307), Enrico Castellani (Gallery 307), Lucio Fontana (Gallery 307), and Christian Megert (Gallery 307), among others. A group of works representing Minimalism and the ZERO Movement was also acquired, which today remains a fascinating continuation of the Rupfs' original collection, since in the early days of their collecting we can see an undeniable preference for the tradition of constructivist and conceptual art.

The creation of the Rupf Foundation guaranteed that the collection would be conserved, consolidated and expanded. The Foundation still focuses on the most recent contemporary art without losing sight of the core of the collection, comprised of the wonderful works of art gathered by Rupf. This exhibition reveals the coherence and evolution of the Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf as a reflection of the art of their day.

This is the first time that this collection has travelled to Spain, with an extensive selection of works rendered between 1907 and 2016.

TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION

Gallery 305

This gallery displays some of the first paintings that Hermann Rupf purchased between 1907 and 1908 from the Parisian gallery owned by his friend Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. They include the three portraits of Kahnweiler painted by Picasso in 1907, all of which are on display in this exhibition.

Both Rupf and Kahnweiler were trained at the Commerz-und Disconto-Bank in Frankfurt. While Kahnweiler continued his training as an intern at a stock brokerage firm in Paris from 1902 to 1904, Rupf began to work at the company Jacques Meyer Fils & Cie (currently Galleries Lafayette). From the very start, the two shared an interest in literature and music, and they both attended a host of theatre performances and concerts. Fascinated by both classical and modern art, they spent a great deal of time at the Louvre and in different galleries. After yet another sojourn abroad, this time in London, Rupf returned to his hometown of Bern started to work at the mercery and haberdashery owned by his brother-in-law, Ruedi Hossmann, where he became a co-proprietor in 1908.

Thereafter, the company was known as "Hossmann & Rupf." After marrying Margrit Rupf in 1910, he tended to heed his own judgement when purchasing the works in his collection, although his Paris art dealer and personal friend Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler played a key role in shaping the collection. Thanks to his gallery, Rupf was able to boost his collection with works by Fernand Léger (Gallery 306), Juan Gris (Gallery 306), and later André Masson. As attested to in the almost 800 letters still conserved, Hermann Rupf and Kahnweiler enjoyed a life-long friendship.

On Rupf's business trips to Paris to expand his assortment of mercery and haberdashery goods with fashion accessories, he would meet with Kahnweiler in his gallery and sometimes accompany him on his visits to artists. As early as 1907, Rupf began to purchase works by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and the artists of Fauvism, such as Othon Friesz and André Derain.

One of his first purchases was *Head of a Man (Tête d'homme)* by Picasso from 1908, as well as the Georges Braque work *Houses at L'Estaque (Maisons à l'Estaque)*. The latter painting had been carried by the artist directly from L'Estaque, a town in southern France where he had lived for a period, to what would be his first major exhibition in Kahnweiler's gallery.

In the ensuing years, Rupf gradually expanded his collection with works by Picasso, Braque, André Derain, Juan Gris, and Maurice de Vlaminck. Until the outbreak of World War I, his collection kept growing to become a select set of almost 30 works, most of them Cubist.

When the war broke out, the Parisian gallery owner accepted Rupf's invitation to stay in Bern until it ended. During his exile, Kahnweiler wrote several texts on philosophy and art theory and forged relationships with major figures of the period, including Hans Arp, who was living in Zurich at the time (Gallery 307).

The work in this gallery by Florian Slotawa, *Bernese Pedestals (Bernier Sockel)*, from 2010, deserves special mention. The artist carefully studied the Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf, as well as its history, and he chose four sculptures: *Leaf-Torso (Blatt-Torso)*, 1963 by Hans Arp, *Margrit Rupf-Wirz* (1922) by Max Fueter, *Kneeling Nude (Nu agenouillé)*, 1929 by Henri Laurens, and *Lying Cow (Liegende Kuh)*, 1925 by Ewald Mataré. For each of these four pieces, which are representative of the Rupf Collection, Slotawa designed with a pedestal made with furnishings that were originally found in the collectors' home.

Gallery 306

In the years after the Great War, the Rupfs were able to resume the expansion of their collection. In the early 1920's, they added the latest works by Georges Braque (Gallery 305), André Derain (Gallery 305), Juan Gris (Gallery 206), Henri Laurens (Gallery 306), Fernand Léger (Gallery 306), Paul Klee (Gallery 307), and Louis Moillet (Gallery 307). Just like prior to the war, during this period hardly any time elapsed between the creation of the works and their acquisition by the Rupfs.

At that point, Kahnweiler did not manage to keep all the artists with which he worked before the war at his gallery. However, he soon landed new artists such as Paul Klee, whom he represented abroad in 1933 thanks to Rupf's mediation.

In this gallery, you can see the artistic evolution of Juan Gris from 1913 until 1925, along with a work by Picasso also from 1913, *Violin Hanging on the wall (Violin)* [*Un violon accroché au mur (Le violon)*]. He also forged ties with other artists, such as Fernand Léger in *Contrasts of Forms (Contrastes de formes)*, also from 1913, and Henri Laurens, whose works in this exhibition illustrate part of the evolution of his sculptural oeuvre; after his early days as a Cubist, Laurens shifted to working with voluminous forms and the female figure.

Untitled No. 85-065 (1985) by Donald Judd is an abstract sculpture made of aluminum mounted on the wall; it is part of a series of modular works in bright colors crafted between 1983 and 1990. All the modules are the same height, depth, and width, and in them the artist deliberately tried to avoid combinations of "harmonious" or "dissonant" colors.

Gallery 307

The Rupfs were close friends with Paul and Lily Klee, and after 1913 they regularly acquired works from Klee. Paul Klee moved back to Bern after the closure of the Bauhaus Dessau, where he taught, because the Nazis regarded him as a “degenerate painter.” One clear illustration of their close friendship is the fact that the artist gave Hermann and Margrit Rupf dedicated works on important occasions like birthdays and Christmas.

Likewise, the Rupfs were also patrons of many artists, scientists, and musicians in the city of Bern. Hermann Rupf was an active art critic and played a prominent role in nurturing the taste for contemporary art. Between 1909 and 1931, he wrote criticism for the Social Democratic weekly *Berner Tagwacht* which was targeted at the conservative cultural policy of the era and called for a greater understanding of contemporary art.

Rupf purchased a series of drawings directly from Klee for the first time in 1914, and between 1931 and 1933 he belonged to the Klee Society, created in the 1920's to guarantee the artist additional income by contributions of at least 50 Imperial Marks in exchange for the privilege of being able to purchase works from the artist under special conditions.

By 1940, when Klee died after a long illness, the Rupfs owned 26 of his works. From then on, the artist's widow, Lily Klee, was in charge of his legacy, from which Rupf purchased another 17 works until her death in 1946.

Thanks to their relationship with Klee, in the early 1930's the Rupfs met Vasily Kandinsky and his wife, Nina. Just like Klee, Kandinsky had also been a teacher at the Bauhaus Dessau. The Kandinskys and Rupfs met in 1933, although initially they were brought together not so much over art but because of Rupf's economic assistance. In 1934, Kandinsky gave his “Swiss financial advisor” the watercolor he titled *Sonorous (Klangvoll, 1929)* to show his appreciation for Rupf's help. In the ensuing years, the two couples became close friends, and the Rupfs remained close with Nina Kandinsky even after her husband's death in 1944. Sixteen of his works (five of which can be seen in this gallery) reached the Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf, not without difficulties, since during the artist's lifetime they had only purchased one painting in the autumn of 1935, *Calm Tension (Tension tranquille)*, painted that same year. The works displayed in the exhibition date from 1916 to 1940 and encompass Kandinsky's oeuvre from his temporary return to Russia until his later works in Paris.

The collection harbors two special works that Rupf purchased in 1939 in a historical auction of “paintings and sculptures by modern masters from German Museums”—regarded as “degenerate art”—held in Lucerne. At first, Rupf expressed his doubts to Kahnweiler, as hinted at by his own words: “With regard to the sale of German paintings in Lucerne, I am of the opinion that no one should bid so that that gang will have no more expenses and will sell nothing. That would be wonderful. Or, if possible, all the paintings should be purchased at rock-bottom prices, with no high bids. But this can't be arranged in advance.” Despite his initial qualms, he ultimately bought two

works, *Garden Restaurant* (*Gartenrestaurant*, 1912) by August Macke and *Lying Cow* (*Liegende Kuh*, 1925) by Ewald Mataré (Gallery 305). This purchase was particularly valuable to Rupf, since his three best “artist friends” were now represented in his collection—Klee, Macke, and Moillet—with whom he had taken a celebrated trip to Tunis in 1914.

In this gallery, we can see that the Rupf collection as it stood as not supposed to be viewed as complete; instead, it had to continue to evolve. Works by Hans Arp, Meret Oppenheim, Lucio Fontana, and the ZERO Group, among others, close and complete the show.

DIDAKTIKA: The Rupfs, free spirits

As part of the Didaktika project that complements our exhibitions, this show offers an educational area where the spotlight shines on Hermann and Margrit Rupf. This space will share information about the open-minded ideas and unusual lifestyle of the Swiss couple, as well as their artistic tastes, and visitors will be able to peruse documentary images related to their personal and professional life that reflect the modern spirit of cities like Paris and Berlin.

Activities

Conversation: Meet the Rupfs

Wednesday, November 9

Talk with Susanne Friedli, curator of the exhibition, about the Rupfs’ free spirit and passion for collecting, followed by brief encounters with several of the artists featured in the show.

Venue and time: Museum Auditorium, 6:30 pm. Simultaneous interpretation into Spanish provided. Free tickets available at the admissions desk and website.

Shared Reflections

Discover the new exhibition, the behind-the-scenes setup process, and other curious details on these special tours led by museum professionals.

Curatorial Vision

- *The Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf*: Wednesday, November 23, Petra Joos, exhibition curator

Key Concepts

- *The Collection of Hermann and Margrit Rupf*: Wednesday, December 7, Luz Maguregui, Education Coordinator

Meeting point and time: Information desk, 6:30 pm. Tickets available only on the website: 2 € museum members / 3 € general public (price of admission not included). Minimum of 8 people per group / max. 20.

*Sponsored by Fundación Vizcaína Aguirre

The Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation

The Rupfs were the first private Swiss collectors to occupy themselves with abstract art. In 1954, they decided to give their holdings—around 250 artworks and numerous art books—to the Kunstmuseum Bern via a foundation. Without losing sight of the impressive core collection of artworks assembled by the Rupfs, the Foundation continues to expand the collection today with more recent works of contemporary art.

Hermann Rupf repeatedly supported the local art scene, often despite his own personal concerns and fears. He regularly provided financing to different creators, and his commitment to the public soon led him to lend paintings from his collection. In the mid-1930's, the Rupfs began to ponder where their collection should go so that it could be displayed in public. Almost 20 years later, in 1954, they finally managed to create the Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation.

After the founders' deaths in the early 1960's, the Hermann and Margrit Rupf Collection belonging to the Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation, made up of 41 paintings, 14 sculptures, 23 drawings, 149 prints, and 32 books containing original engravings was deposited at the Kunstmuseum Bern. The Rupfs also left the rest of their assets to the Foundation as well, thus guaranteeing that it could continue to acquire new artworks in the future.

In 1956, the collection was catalogued and displayed in the Kunstmuseum Bern for the first time. In the early years, Hermann Rupf kept careful watch over the Foundation's activities, and even considered the possibility of selling some of its works. In 1961, Margrit Rupf died, and her husband followed her one year later. From that time on, the responsibility for new acquisitions shifted to the Board.

Cover image:

Pablo Picasso (Málaga, Spain, 1881–Mougins, France, 1973)

Head of a Man (Tête d'homme), 1908

Oil on wood

27 x 21 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2016.

For more information:

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For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.es

Pablo Picasso (Málaga, Spain, 1881–Mougins, France, 1973)

Portrait of D.-H. Kahnweiler II, 1957

Lithography

65 x 49 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2016



André Derain (Chatou, France, 1880–Garches, France, 1954)

Landscape near Cassis (Paysage aux environs de Cassis), 1907

Oil on canvas

33x 41cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© André Derain, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



Pablo Picasso (Málaga, Spain, 1881–Mougins, France, 1973)

Head of a Man (Tête d'homme), 1908

Oil on wood

27 x 21 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2016



Pablo Picasso (Málaga, Spain, 1881–Mougins, France, 1973)

Violin Hanging on a Wall (The Violin) (Un violon accroché au mur [Le violon]), 1913

Oil and sand on canvas

65 x 46 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2016



Florian Slotawa (Rosenheim, Germany, 1972)
Bernese Pedestals (Berliner Sockel), 2010
Group of four sculptures, various materials
Dimensions variable
Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern
© Florian Slotawa, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



Georges Braque (Argenteuil-sur-Seine, France, 1882–Paris, 1963)
Violin and Bow (Violon et archet), 1911
Oil on canvas
46 x 33 cm
Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern
© Georges Braque, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



Juan Gris (Madrid, 1887–Boulogne-Billancourt, France, 1927)
Book and Pipe (Livre et pipe), 1925
Oil on canvas
27 x 35 cm
Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern



Donald Judd (Excelsior Springs, Missouri, 1928–New York, 1994)
Untitled, no. 85–065, 1985
Aluminum
30 x 120 x 30 cm
Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern
© Donald Judd, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



Fernand Léger (Argentan, France, 1881–Gif-sur-Yvette, France, 1955)
Still Life (Nature morte), 1922
Oil on canvas
65 x 50 cm
Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern
© Fernand Léger, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



Meret Oppenheim (Berlin, 1913–Basel, Switzerland, 1985)
A Face in a Cloud (Gesicht in Wolke), 1971
Rugosit and wood, oil and watercolor, and varnish
39 x 39 x 13 cm
Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern
© Meret Oppenheim, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



Paul Klee (Münchenbuchsee, Switzerland, 1879–Muralto, Switzerland, 1940)

Full Moon in the Garden (Vollmond im Garten), 1934

Oil on primed canvas

50.3 x 60.1 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© Paul Klee's Estate/VEGAP, 2016



Hans Arp (Strasbourg, France, 1886–Basel, Switzerland, 1966)

Flower-Animal (Blume-Tier), 1953

Wood relief, painted and framed on Pavatex plate

48 x 53.5 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© Hans Arp, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



Vasily Kandinsky (Moscow, 1866–Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, 1944)

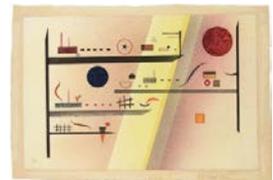
Split Horizontal (Horizontale divisée), 1935

Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper

35 x 54 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© Vasily Kandinsky, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



André Masson (Balagny-sur-Thérain, France, 1896–Paris, 1987)

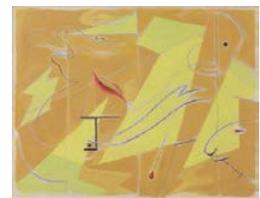
Beheaded Ox (Le bœuf égorgé), 1930

Oil on canvas

65 x 81 cm

Hermann und Margrit Rupf-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

© André Masson, VEGAP, Bilbao, 2016



From left to right: Margrit Rupf-Wirz, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, unidentified woman, and Hermann Rupf in Mürren, ca. 1945. Unknown photographer, Rupf Archive, Kunstmuseum Bern



From left to right: Margrit Rupf, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Renée Wirz (nowadays, Ziegler-Wirz) and Hermann Rupf in Mürren, ca. 1945.

Unknown photographer, Rupf Archive, Kunstmuseum Bern

