

Hilti Art
Foundation

16 December 2016 – 7 October 2018

**Kirchner, Léger,
Scully & more**

Works from the Hilti Art Foundation

**KUNSTMUSEUM
LIECHTENSTEIN**

Dear Visitors,

Since May 2015, the Hilti Art Foundation annexe has been a valuable addition to Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein. The building designed by Morger + Dettli architects, Basel, was erected by the Hilti Art Foundation, its fundamental aesthetic concept echoing the visual vocabulary and configuration of the Kunstmuseum's exhibition rooms. The accord that exists between the two buildings, both inside and out, convincingly lends expression to the sense of both togetherness and independence of both partners.

However, the gift of the annexe is not limited to the building alone. Since opening in 2000, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein has already had various opportunities to showcase works from the Hilti Art Foundation collection for special exhibitions and presentations of the collection, exhibiting the collection to the public in its first comprehensive show in 2005, and this collaboration with the annexe is now set to be significantly deepened. The collection of the Hilti Art Foundation will now be permanently open to the public in changing annual exhibitions. With its emphasis on art from the late 19th century to the present, it is the ideal complement to the state collection of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein.

The current show once again demonstrates the outstanding quality of this collection. By focusing on selected artistic positions and their presentation with a number of works, it demonstrates the expertise and quality standards underlying the Foundation's collecting activities. The fact that the collection will continue to grow in years ahead heralds great things. Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein is happy and grateful for this pleasant and extraordinary collaboration and for the support.

Our thanks go first and foremost to the Hilti Art Foundation and the Hilti family for the annexe and the ongoing support provided to Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein for many years. Thanks are due also to Dr. Uwe Wieczorek, curator of the Hilti Art Foundation, for the good, close collaboration and for taking charge of the exhibition once again. His fine sense for the special qualities involved in the interplay between the selected artistic positions and the various works is a crucial factor in making this a convincing exhibition.

Dr. Friedemann Malsch
Director

Introduction

A private collection enjoys the singular privilege of reflecting individual interests through the collector's entirely personal approach to art. This also applies to the steadily growing collection of the Hilti Art Foundation, whose holdings currently comprise some 200 paintings, sculptures, objects and photographs from classical modernism to the present day. After more than 20 years of thoughtfully targeted collecting, increasingly important keynotes of the collection have emerged, including Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Concrete Art and Zero. Some of the artists are represented by several works, for instance Kirchner, Picasso, Beckmann, Giacometti, Graubner, Knoebel, Scully and Struth.

Since May 2015, the Hilti Art Foundation has been housed in a building of its own, which adjoins the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein. A changing selection of works from the collection, modified in seamless transition, will be on view for a period of between 12 and 18 months. The aim of these exhibitions is to show the diversity of a collection, that has in turn been inspired by the diversity of art from the late 19th century to the present day, and in so doing, to give viewers an insight into the aesthetic, substantial and artistic concerns of an epoch during which our understanding of the world and reality has undergone radical change.

May all of the exhibitions presented in the new building of the Hilti Art Foundation testify to the fact that collecting art is not merely a matter of personal pleasure, and even less so of garnering public favour. The driving force behind these exhibitions is to demonstrate that art can foster the best qualities of a society and unlock its exceptional creative and human potential. And it is through a sense of responsibility and active citizenship that a *res privata* can acquire the nature of a *res publica*.

Dr. Uwe Wieczorek
Curator of the exhibition

The Mystery of Humankind

The question as to what the human being is or could be is originally a philosophical one and, while it can be asked by means of language, it cannot be staged by means of images. In the image, be it a painting, sculpture or photograph, the human being always appears to us as a concrete figure that has already become, and the manner of his appearance, his physical and psychological traits, may allow us to draw conclusions as to who or what he is.

Of course, this image remains incomplete as it never depicts the human being in his entirety, but always only in details. **Medardo Rosso (6)**, for example, captures the brief moment of a first visual impression in the delicate features of a child, modelled in wax and thus alluding to the malleability of young life. **Paul Gauguin (1)** also turns his eye to children, their hesitant steps leading to an unknown world. In the works of **Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Ferdinand Hodler, Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger, Henri Laurens** and **Max Beckmann** this life is already in full bloom, albeit depicted in a range of very different interpretations. With **Lehmbruck (2)**, the human being appears as a superpersonal unity of body, soul and mind, calmly focused on itself; with **Hodler (3)**, as a highly individual love-inspired young woman, whose gaze is directed fleetingly, yet as if eternally at a living person in front of her. **Picasso (8)** presents his lover in sensual, gently flowing forms, while **Léger (7)** captures a dancer in an almost statuary pose. Her sedate plasticity is paralleled in **Laurens' Flora (9)**, who also visualises not movement, but the eternal harmony of female volumes. **Beckmann (4)**, in turn, sees the young bar girl in the context of the concrete reality of life. In a place of gaudy pleasures, surrounded by war, she has withdrawn to a quiet little room to be completely for herself for the duration of a cigarette. Her erotic appeal contrasts starkly with **Alberto Giacometti's Quatre femmes sur socle (5)**. Although ladies of the night, they resemble hieratic figures seen from afar, almost unsubstantial, alien and blurred of detail. Viewing from up close, the eye is lost in cracked surfaces.

In whatever form he appears, the human being, regardless of what he may conclude from his existence and action in the world, is and remains an inscrutable mystery and miracle. After all, regardless of the form of thinking and seeing, of word and image, he never gains comprehensive knowledge of his self or of his fellow human being. He is always *more* than what he can know of himself or of the other in the past, present and future.

The figures in parentheses indicate the appropriate floor and catalogue numbers.

The Mystery of Humankind

1

Paul Gauguin (1848–1903)

Entre les lys, 1889

Oil on canvas

92 × 73.5 cm

2

Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881–1919)

Torso der Grossen Stehenden, 1910

Stone cast

118 × 50 × 37 cm

3

Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918)

Bildnis Valentine Godé-Darel (La Parisienne I), 1909

Oil on canvas

41.8 × 40.5 cm

4

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

Frau mit Zigarette in Blauviolett, 1944

Oil on canvas

95 × 56 cm

5

Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966)

Quatre femmes sur socle, 1950

Bronze

75.5 × 41 × 17 cm

6

Medardo Rosso (1858–1928)

Bambino ebreo, 1892

Wax on plaster

22 × 14.6 × 16.5 cm

7

Fernand Léger (1881–1955)

La danseuse, 1929

Oil on canvas

92 × 73 cm

8

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Femme dans un fauteuil, 1932

Oil on canvas

92.1 × 73 cm

9

Henri Laurens (1885–1954)

Flora, 1939

Fired clay

27 × 29 × 24.5 cm

Experiment and Existence

By the mid-nineteenth century, if not earlier, the unbounding of knowledge in science and the arts, the unleashing of technology and the economy led to a completely new understanding of the world and reality that challenged artists, be it in image, sculpture, photography, film, object or action, to devise radical reactions and to experiment with forms of composition and expression that equally incorporated their own lives.

The focus of the expressionist art of **Ernst Ludwig Kirchner**, one of the founders of the artist group known as “Brücke”, is on the human being in the immediacy of his existence, life in the frenzy of the modern city, and existence in the intimacy of the studio (11). **Kirchner** also sought nature (13) as a place of physical and emotional regeneration. **Max Beckmann**, in contrast, was interested in the “mystery of existence” itself, for example the apocalyptic fantasies of a soldier oscillating between reality and dream (18) or the endlessness of space on the Mediterranean coast (17). Recurrently, he focused on his own self in conditions of happy and menacing circumstances (15/16). Beckmann always saw reality, even the window of a fish shop (14), in terms of its symbolism too, as the outer appearance of an underlying truth that he sought to reveal by means of painting. **Paul Klee** also had a broad interest in the world, but his symbolic universe of images is rooted in a profoundly poetic imagination that drew on stimuli from nature, music and theatre and, not least, from the artistic creations of children and the mentally ill (19/20/23). **Jean Dubuffet** also discovered new forms of creative originality in these creations, putting forward a “crude art” (24/25) in opposition to Western civilisation, that he viewed critically. **Wassily Kandinsky** paved the way for the trend towards abstraction in the works of Dubuffet, Klee and **Hans Arp** (21) at an early stage. “Inner necessity” was the term he coined to describe the formative drive of his abstract art (22). As of the 1930s, however, he even viewed the abstract as too object-bound. Kandinsky strove for concrete art that referred to nothing but itself.

In the wake of the global disasters of the 1930s and 40s, the existence of humankind was challenged, both physically and morally. In the light of this experience, **Alberto Giacometti (26)** focused specifically on the human form, on that which existentially constitutes the human form in terms of appearance and substance. **Wols (27)**, on the other hand, reacted to the upheavals of his time and his life like a kind of seismograph. Dispensing with the object, he used line and colour alone to lend artistic expression to his psychological impulses.

Experiment and Existence

10

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938)

Stilleben mit Orangen und Tulpen, 1909

Oil on canvas

55 × 65 cm

11

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938)

Paar unter Japanschirm, 1913

Oil on canvas

100 × 75.5 cm

12

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938)

**Kniende, nach links gewandter Kopf, rechte Hand
auf der linken Brust, 1912**

Wood (Swiss stone pine)

21.6 × 9 × 6 cm

13

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938)

Weg zur Staffel, 1919

Oil on canvas

120 × 120 cm

14

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

Bücklinge, 1928

Oil on canvas

34 × 59 cm

15

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

Mann im Dunkeln, 1934

Bronze (Cast between 1958 and 1968)

56.7 × 28.5 × 18 cm

16

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

Selbstbildnis mit Glaskugel, 1936

Oil on canvas

110.2 × 64.4 cm

17

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

Strand mit Booten an der Riviera, 1938

Oil on canvas

60.5 × 80 cm

18

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

Traum des Soldaten, 1942/43

Oil on canvas

90 × 145 cm

19

Paul Klee (1879–1940)

Märchen, 1929

Watercolour on primed paper on canvas

50.1 × 42.5 cm

20

Paul Klee (1879–1940)

Clown, 1929

Oil on canvas

68 × 50.5 cm

21

Hans Arp (1887–1966)

Kopf-Stabile, 1926

Painted wood

61 × 53.3 × 21 cm

22

Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944)

Entre Deux, 1934

Oil, tempera on canvas

130 × 95 cm

23

Paul Klee (1879–1940)

Gemüsegarten, 1925

Oil on cardboard

36 × 53 cm

24

Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985)

Paysage noir avec joueur de fifre, 1949

Oil on canvas

89.5 × 116.5 cm

25

Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985)

Riant été, 1954

Oil on canvas

89.5 × 116.5 cm

26

Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966)

Buste d'homme (Eli Lotar II), 1964/65

Bronze

57.7 × 36.5 × 25 cm

27

Wols (1913–1951)

La flamme, 1946/47

Oil on canvas

41 × 33 cm

François Morellet, **Gotthard Graubner**, **Imi Knoebel**, **Keith Sonnier** and **Sean Scully** are important exponents of art from 1945 to the present. Their works not only point to the purely material qualities of art, but also to the underlying possibility of crossing the boundary from the material to the intellectual solely with non-representational means.

While **Graubner (30/31/32)** and **Scully (33/34/35)** continued the grand tradition of non-representational painting, each expanding this sphere in very different ways, **Morellet (36)** and **Knoebel (28)** set out to explore this tradition in a critical, but also playful manner, for example the geometrical abstraction of Kazimir Malevich or Piet Mondrian. **Morellet** was above all interested in rules and changes of ordering systems that may be described with such terms as rhythm, coincidence or movement. Since 1962, he also began working with light bulbs and neon. To him, neon light was an ideal material “thanks to its straight, hard, cold and brutal nature”. In **Négatif n.º14 (36)** he makes direct reference to one of the most famous paintings of the 20th century, the *Black Square* by Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich from 1913. Not only is the square skewed, it also threatens to fall out of the “frame”.

Knoebel reprises the question already posed by Duchamp prior to the outbreak of the First World War regarding what an artwork is and what meaning it may have in view of constantly changing ideas of reality. He works with geometrical forms of composition and with forms of expression borrowed from art informel and, crossing the boundaries of genre, with image, relief, assemblage and sculpture. Oscillating between cool concept and pure sensuousness, between construction and deconstruction, Knoebel displays a serious, if tongue-in-cheek relish in creating image-works that elude any dogma.

Keith Sonnier (29) has been working since the end of the 1960s with materials such as glass, lead, grease, latex, wire, aluminium and, like Morellet, neon light. In New York he came into contact with a young, interdisciplinary art scene who were devising new concepts in the media of performance, dance, video and installation. Sonnier continues to unite high-tech achievements with artistic forms derived from many independent cultural areas. By his own account, he associated neon light with an almost religious experience: "Returning one evening from a party, he drove through the level country (Louisiana) [...] and suddenly saw 'waves of neon light' move up and down in the dense fog. Simply incredible."

Immanence und Transcendence

28

Imi Knoebel (*1940)

Figur 49, 1988

Acrylic on wood

170 × 250 × 6.8 cm

29

Keith Sonnier (*1941)

**Lit Square – right side variation (2-M-N), 1969
(2015)**

Glass, neon, wiring and transformer

200 × 200 × 18 cm

30

Gotthard Graubner (1930–2013)

Lichter Körper, 1968

Foam cushion on canvas, covered with Perlon and
painted

100 × 100 × 12 cm

31

Gotthard Graubner (1930–2013)

Herbstnacht, 1990/91

Acrylic on canvas on synthetic cotton on canvas

255 × 255 × 18 cm

32

Gotthard Graubner (1930–2013)

Haut, 2010

Acrylic on canvas on synthetic cotton on canvas

74 × 64 × 11 cm

33

Sean Scully (*1945)

Plum, 1982

Oil on board

52.5 × 53 × 5.8 cm

34

Sean Scully (*1945)

Dreamland, 1987

Oil on canvas

228 × 296.5 × 14 cm

35

Sean Scully (*1945)

Doric Grey, 2012

Oil on linen

71.6 × 81.3 × 4.3 cm

36

François Morellet (1926–2016)

Négatif n.º 14, 2011

Neon, acrylic on canvas on wood

147 × 147 × 5 cm

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