

Zurich, 10 July 2024

Joint media release

Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft seeks solutions for the Bührle Collection together with the owner

The historian Prof. Raphael Gross, acting on behalf of the City and Canton of Zurich and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, has reviewed the existing research into the Bührle Collection. One of his conclusions is that considerable further research is required, focusing on clarifying the issue of former Jewish ownership. The Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft and the works' owner, the Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection, have agreed to discussions with a view to finding sustainable solutions.

The works from the Bührle Collection have been displayed on long-term loan in the Chipperfield building of the Kunsthaus Zürich since October 2021. The loan agreement between the Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft (the patron association of the Kunsthaus Zürich) provides for the loan to continue until the end of 2034. In May 2023, the City and Canton of Zurich and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft appointed Prof. Raphael Gross to conduct an independent review of the existing research into the provenance of the Bührle Collection. In so doing, they were following the recommendations of the Round Table which they set up to make preparations for the evaluation. In particular, the review was intended to establish whether there are substantiated indications that the works include cultural property confiscated as a result of Nazi persecution. The subsidy agreement between the City of Zurich and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft approved by the City Parliament in March 2023 stipulates that no such works may be exhibited at the Kunsthaus.

Thanks go to Raphael Gross and his team of experts

The 167-page report on the review has been available to the commissioning bodies, the Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection and the general public since the end of June 2024 ([media release dated 28 June 2024](#)). The City and Canton of Zurich and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, as commissioning bodies, wish to thank Raphael Gross and his team. They note that a considerable number of the works in the Bührle Collection were in Jewish ownership prior to the Second World War. They are pleased to see that the report acknowledges the high standards underlying both the new provenance strategy presented by the Kunsthaus in March 2023 and the new subsidy agreement between the City of Zurich and the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft which came into force in spring 2023. The Kunsthaus Zürich is already consistently implementing this strategy, conducting systematic research and proactively seeking just and fair solutions at the required level for its own collection.

Kunsthaus's high standards confirmed

Raphael Gross's study shows that this is not yet the case with regard to the Bührle Collection. While it acknowledges that the Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection has carried out much research of its own and that this forms an important basis for further investigations, it finds that the new standards set by the Kunstgesellschaft and laid down in the subsidy agreement have not been met.

An important step towards a sustainable solution

The commissioning bodies see it as their responsibility to analyse the recommendations set out in the report and define the next steps. A suitable approach to achieving sustainable solutions needs to be put in place as soon as possible. The focus will be on further provenance research to form the basis for assessing whether the works constitute cultural property confiscated as a result of Nazi persecution, and for arriving at just and fair solutions.

Philipp Hildebrand, Chair of the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, comments: "The Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft naturally wishes to ensure that all the works on display in the Kunsthaus meet the same high standards, in accordance with the provenance strategy which we adopted in spring 2023."

The report's recommendations pose complex challenges for the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft as operator of the Kunsthaus. Full implementation would have far-reaching, long-term implications for the Kunsthaus as the institution to which the Bührle Collection has been loaned, extending in some cases far beyond the loan agreement which currently runs until 2034. These include the fact that although the works from the Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection are shown at the Kunsthaus on long-term loan, they are still owned by the Foundation. This means that the Foundation remains responsible for handling any claims made by third parties relating to works in the Collection. Moreover, further, in-depth research within the framework of the long-term loan will take a number of years to complete and is likely to incur high costs.

“Raphael Gross's report is a clear mandate. It is now essential to take responsibility and find ways to get the necessary research efforts under way swiftly”, says Government Councillor Jacqueline Fehr, Head of the Canton of Zurich Department of Justice and Home Affairs.

Dialogue with the Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection

In view of the challenging circumstances, it is incumbent on the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft to find good solutions, in consultation with the City and Canton of Zurich and working with the Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection. The Foundation has confirmed its willingness to take part, and initial further discussions will be held after the summer break. The Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft will inform the public as soon as results from these discussions are available.

Corine Mauch, Mayor of Zurich, says: “The report by Prof. Raphael Gross which we commissioned has taken us an important step further in the debate over the right way to address the Bührle Collection at the Kunsthaus. I would like to thank everyone, and in particular the members of the Round Table, for their contribution to this achievement.”

The Kunsthaus will pursue its curatorial efforts to deal in an appropriate way with the works on long-term loan.

Note to editors:

- A briefing by Mayor Corine Mauch, Government Councillor Jacqueline Fehr and Kunsthaus Director Ann Demeester will take place between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. today in the Bührle Collection exhibition rooms in the Chipperfield building at the Kunsthaus Zürich.
- Information from the commissioning bodies regarding the project to review the existing provenance research on the Bührle Collection can also be obtained from Lukas Wigger, Head of Communications, City of Zurich Mayor's Department: tel. +41 44 412 30 65, e-mail prd-kommunikation@zuerich.ch.
- Prof. Raphael Gross's report is available on the [website of the Kunsthaus Zürich](#).
- [Infographic Bührle Collection and Kunsthaus Zürich](#) (updated)