

kunstmuseum basel

Pair ings

August 17, 2024

The Im Obersteg Collection

The Im Obersteg Collection is a private collection started in 1916 that was developed in Basel and Geneva. It has been housed in the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004.

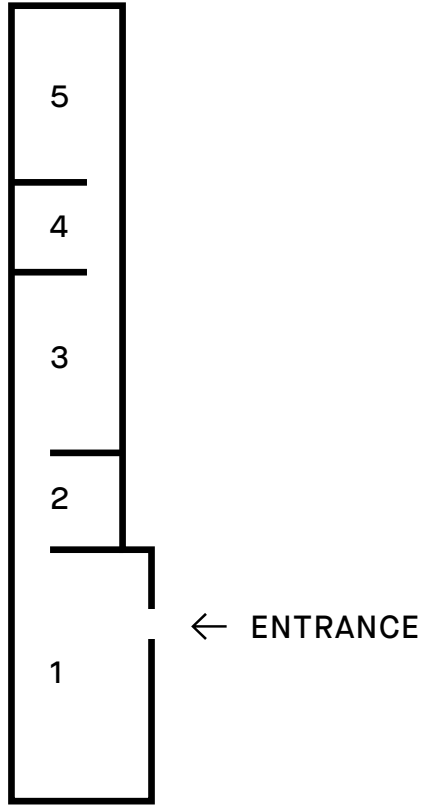
The Basel shipping contractor Karl Im Obersteg (1883–1969) and his son Jürg Im Obersteg (1914–1983), professor of forensic medicine, collected international art of the twentieth century for some seventy years. The core of the important collection, which today comprises around 220 works, can be traced back to Karl's interests. In 1916, he acquired his first painting, by Cuno Amiet. Later this was followed by important works by Marc Chagall, Alexej von Jawlensky, Pablo Picasso, Chaïm Soutine, and others.

Following a sustained preference for representational modernism from the French and Russian cultural sphere, Karl and Jürg Im Obersteg began to open up to new artistic trends after the Second World War. Color-determined abstractions, for instance by Jean-Paul Riopelle, and works by Louis Soutter, Jean Dubuffet, and Antoni Tàpies found their way into the collection.

After Karl Im Obersteg's death, Jürg continued to run his father's company and maintain the art collection. Together with his wife Doris Im Obersteg-Lerch (1931–2015), he was—like his father—surrounded by art and engaged intensively with the works. Expanding the collection, he acquired works by Lyonel Feininger, Emil Nolde, and Marianne von Werefkin, among others.

After Jürg's death, Doris Im Obersteg-Lerch established the Im Obersteg Foundation, which displayed the art collection in a villa in Oberhofen on Lake Thun during the summer months from 1995 to 2002. She then entrusted it to the Kunstmuseum Basel on permanent loan. Thus, the collection has returned to the city of its origin, where it can be accessible to a broad public and stands in dialog with a first-rate public collection.

KUNSTMUSEUM BASEL | HAUPTBAU GROUND FLOOR



Pair ings

By displaying works of art from the private Im Obersteg Collection side by side with works from the Kunstmuseum Basel's holdings, the *Pairings* exhibition establishes elective affinities that transcend generations and stylistic boundaries. What connects the juxtaposed paintings and sculptures? How do they differ? Do the paired works enrich each other through the dialogue?

The accompanying exhibition booklet brings together short texts by authors who have engaged with the works from different perspectives. Visitors can also use headphones to hear compositions performed by local young musicians. The pairings are regularly broken up and rehung to involve the exhibited works in other dialogues. The rendez-vous between the two collections develops into a slowly evolving choreography.

ROOM 1

JEAN-PAUL RIOPELLE (1923–2002)

Composition, 1951

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1451

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

WALTER BODMER (1903–1973)

Draht- und Metallplastik (Wire and Metal Sculpture), 1955

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1978.53

Gift of Margy Bodmer, Basel 1978

Metallplastik (Metal Sculpture), 1965–1966

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1978.54

Gift of Margy Bodmer, Basel 1978

Ilma Rakusa is an author, translator, and literary critic;
she lives in Zurich.

There Is No Such Thing as Standing Still

Movement as a primal impulse. There is no such thing as standing still. Everything is in a whirl in Jean-Paul Riopelle's *Composition*, made of sprays and dabs and streams and lines of color, a magma that forms rhythms and structures. Random or controlled by hand? The explosive intensity of the process captured here is more like a natural event. Something bursts into a thousand pieces, leaving behind splinters and shreds that come together to form what appears as order, which—on closer inspection—is itself made up of fragments and particles. And these particles move. Only here they are lashed down in a snapshot of a moment. Indeed, the picture does not really want to be a picture. The artist's intention is the act of painting, which amounts to an event without intention. It happens. Given enough paints on hand, the Action Painting develops its own dynamic. With or without a brush or palette knife. On whatever painting surface. And draws us into its vortex. We see surfaces and deep structures, networks of lines and blotches of color, we search for paths for the eye to find its way out of the labyrinth of diverse stimuli that arouse us. Our pulse quickens and suddenly we are no longer sure whether what we see is chaos or order, whether concealed behind the *Composition* is an artistic big bang.

Walter Bodmer's figures create a different kind of tension. Dance-like in their gestural character, they too are all movement, measuring out the space by demanding space. The outstretched arms of the female figure appear not only self-confident, but imperative. Here, the I makes its rounds: make way, don't you come too close to me!

There may be good reasons for this. For instance, to ward someone off. And what is going on with this strange figure threatening to plunge a spear-like spike into the belly of the beauty? She backs away a bit, alarmed by so much importunity. What happens next—we don't know. The halted movement only hints at it.

Bodmer works with wire, which suggests movement instead of volume: through staggered outlines and "limbs." The artfully bent wire produces momentum and rhythm. No coincidence—the artist was also a jazz musician. His sculptures are delicate attempts to make wire, iron, and sheet metal vibrate. And already we are swinging along, hesitantly or not.

ROOM 1

ANTONI CLAVÉ (1913–2005)

Roi et reine (King and Queen), 1960

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1107

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

GERTRUD BOCK-SCHNIRLIN (1878–1948)

Copy after KONRAD WITZ (ca. 1400–ca. 1445–47)

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, 1930

Mirror of salvation Altarpiece, interior

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 1832

Gift of Dr. Geigy-Schlumberger, K. Geigy-Hagenbach,

Dr. Burckhardt-Passavant, Prof. Corning, Prof. Paul Speiser,

Mrs. Vischer-Burckhardt, and Heinrich Buser, 1931

Music

GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL (1685–1759)

Solomon HWV 67, act 3, nos. 59 & 60:

recitative and aria of the Queen of Sheba

Musicians

Elionor Martínez Lara (soprano) is a member of La Capella Reial de Catalunya (conducted by Jordi Savall) and the Collegium Vocale Gent (conducted by Philippe Herreweghe), among others. She received her master's degree from the Basel Academy of Music. **Melanie Flores** (harpsichord) studied in Mexico City and at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, where she is currently completing an additional degree in choral conducting.

ROOM 1

RAOUL DUFY (1877–1953)

La sirène (Siren), ca. 1925–27

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1181

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

RAOUL DUFY (1877–1953)

Trouville-Dauille, les jetees (Jetties at Trouville-Dauville), 1929

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1960.17

Bequest of Dr. h.c. Richard Doetsch-Benziger, Basel, 1960

Marco Schneider is a member of the visitor services team at the Kunstmuseum Basel.

Dream and Awakening

The port of Trouville-Deauville awakens in me a longing for nature, fresh air, the sea, warmth, and carefree times. I gaze into the vastness of the painted seascape as if through a window. The imprecise depiction of the scene emboldens me to give free rein to my own imagination and leave everyday life behind me. As a staff member on the visitor services team at the Kunstmuseum Basel, I am familiar with many masterpieces. I look at them regularly, often for hours, and know every detail. The two paintings by Raoul Dufy, on the other hand, are rarely seen. For me, they are discoveries that invite one to daydream.

The picture opposite, *La sirène*, raises questions: The title reveals that it may be a mermaid (siren), but she looks human-like. The artist seems to have transported a scene from Greek mythology into the present. I once read that sirens are known to lure passing sailors with their beguiling song and then kill them. In the background of the picture, I see two ships approaching the beautiful woman. I am filled with unease and suddenly realize that, as the viewer, I am standing closest to the dangerous siren.

The Norman harbor view enticed me into dreaming. The siren in the second work wakes me up again and warns me to take care not to overlook impending dangers. Ordinary life goes on.

ROOM 1

BERNARD BUFFET (1928–1999)

Marine (Seascape), 1951

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1051

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

LENZ KLOTZ (1925–2017)

Balg (Bellows), 1958

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1980.41

Gift of Dr. Charles F. Leuthardt, Riehen, 1980

Alex Tiefenbacher is a philosopher and climate journalist
at the online magazine *das Lamm*.

Something Is In the Air

Murky, not entirely clear, entangled, unsightly—there is something in the air in both these images. In Klotz’s work, it is obvious, central, and inescapable; in Buffet’s, distant and peripheral. Without Klotz, you might easily miss the fact that something dark is going on in Buffet’s canvas as well. The association I wish to evoke should be evident even after just these few sentences.

Buffet and Klotz would hardly have intended their somber clouds to evoke the climate crisis. But the current state of the world practically forces us to read that dark something hanging in the sky in both paintings as a harbinger of threatening change. The difference is in how close they zoom in on the crisis. It is not dissimilar with our climate emotions. We like to push what looms ahead with global warming far away to a distant horizon. Admittedly, it’s not easy to look at the climate crisis with Klotz’s blunt and truly honest focus. It’s frightening. And unfortunately, we are more than adept at keeping unpleasant feelings at bay as much as possible. Block it off, zoom out, carry on as before. But even if the darkness in Buffet’s work doesn’t immediately catch the eye, it’s still there. Facing the grayness of the cloud remains unavoidable. The climate crisis is coming, and with it will come storms, competition for resources, and fewer vacations. One thing or another is likely to give us a lump in the throat. But it’s useless to mentally gird ourselves against physical reality. If we want to master what is already brewing darkly on the horizon today, we will all have to swallow a bitter pill or two.

ROOM 1

PAUL CEZANNE (1839–1906)

Baigneur assis au bord de l'eau

(Bather sitting near the water), ca. 1876

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1071

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

MIREILLE GROS (*1954)

Bulgarisches Bild (RHODOPA)

(Bulgarian Picture [RHODOPA]), 1995

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 2020.4

Gift of Dr. Dieter Koepplin, Basel 2019

The text was produced on the basis of a conversation between **Géraldine Meyer**, curator of the exhibition, and the Basel artist **Mireille Gros**.

On the Nature of Painting: Finding a Balance

This painting by Paul Cezanne shows a seated human figure leaning against a tree trunk in the greenery. The artist did not intend to make a precise depiction of the human body. The figure's gender, age, and identity remain vague. The brushwork structures the entire picture and integrates the body into its surroundings. Everything is given the same treatment. The naked body seems to absorb the color of the ground and the foliage. The subject of the painting and the rough painting style emphasize the connection between man and nature.

Mireille Gros sees a parallel between Cezanne's work and her own. Her painting is inspired by a landscape in Bulgaria. While walking in the Rhodopes, she observed nature and its colors intensely in order to later incorporate these impressions into her painting. The result is an imaginary representation based on an actual experience of nature.

The artist perceives that there is a balance between cool and warm tones in untouched nature. Gros strives to achieve this balance in her art as well. She notes that Cezanne's paintings also possess this harmony, while the presentation of nature in contemporary photographs and landscapes is often "overheated." This is often caused by the use of photo filters that produce too many warm tones. Moreover, the colors of nature can be altered due to over-fertilization.

Both works harken back to an ultimately harmonious relationship between people and nature. They show that nature is a source of inspiration and that we are all part of it. In our modern world, shaped by the climate crisis, this harmony and ecological balance are at risk. The question thus arises, how can we ensure that future artists can also continue to use nature as a source of inspiration?

ROOM 2

ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY (1864–1941)

Tanzstudie nach Alexander Sacharoff

(Dance Study after Alexander Sacharoff), 1912

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1248

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

ULRIKE ROSENBACH (*1943)

Tanz für eine Frau (Dance for a Woman), 1975

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1996.21

Purchased in 1996

Maya Künzler works as a freelance dance journalist
for various print media and SRF 2 radio.

Dance in a New Era

Two soloists. He, a famous dancer in the first half of the twentieth century; the first male freelancer ever, expressive and androgynous, Alexander Sacharoff. She, an unknown woman in a white, wide-swinging circle skirt. She spins to a Viennese waltz, not in the arms of a man, but rather, alone. The woman's hands come together in front of her body like a self-contained circuit, while she spins around her own axis like a dervish dancer. On shaky ground, but confident and free. It is the seventies of the previous century and women's emancipation is on the rise.

A graphic sketch and a video: two fundamentally different artistic realizations. On the one hand, a snapshot of the dancer Sacharoff, as captured in an expressive pose by his painter friend Alexej von Jawlensky with a few bold strokes. The image on the brown paper is dominated by a feminine face and a hand that protrudes signal-like from the long, elegant fabric cloak. Lively, graceful, and as if frozen for a photo shoot, for one can already sense the next movement in this abstract pantomime as one looks at it. In contrast, the medium of video shows pure flowing movement. The dancer is viewed from above. Her performance has something of a ritual incantation, an homage to female independence.

Just as Sacharoff's new dance art and his sensually staged androgyny was both inspiring and provocative, so there is also a subversive power in the dance of the anonymous woman. Both Jawlensky's drawing study and Ulrike Rosenbach's video convey an inherent sense of awakening, a rebellion against traditional values and role models.

And even if the woman collapses exhausted at the end: she will get up again and keep on turning.

ROOM 2

OTTO PLATTNER (1886–1951)

Der Tod zur Stenotypistin (Death of the Stenographer), 1920

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1421.09

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

HANS BALDUNG, called Grien (1484/85–1545)

Death and the Woman, ca. 1520–25

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 19

From the Museum Faesch 1823

HANS BALDUNG, called Grien (1484/85–1545)

Death and the Maiden, 1517

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 18

From the Museum Faesch 1823

Music

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

String quartet no. 14 in D minor, D 810

Death and the Maiden

Second movement: Andante con moto

Musicians

Quartetto Eos: Elia Chiesa (violin) and **Giacomo Del Papa** (violin), **Alessandro Acqui** (viola), and **Silvia Ancarani** (cello) formed the quartet at the Conservatorio S. Cecilia di Roma in 2016.

The group has won several international competitions and received awards.

After study residencies in Rome, Basel, and Lucerne, the members are now studying as a quartet at the University of Music and Theatre, Munich.

Julia Rüegger is an author and poet as well as a moderator
and cultural journalist in Basel.

Who is “Grenouille,” Suzanne?

I

ROOM 3 She steps into the tub with a great big step, as if she has to cross a threshold. The tub is big enough that the water makes a sloshing sound when she sinks her body into it. Big enough to make small waves when she paddles with her feet or slaps the water with her hand. Even big enough to soon envelop her completely; her torso, her legs, her arms, her head, so that in the end all of her thoughts circle down the drain.

(The washerwoman’s hands afterwards, those watery, whitish wrinkles, do they remind you, Suzanne, of your mother, who was a washerwoman?)

II

And from what body of water does this stone bather emerge? From the Rhine or the river Wiese? From Lake Maggiore? More likely from the pool of a bathing establishment, perhaps at the Margrethen pool in Basel, which opened in 1903?

She holds her arms protectively around her chest and stomach to shield herself from prying eyes or a cool breeze. Tackles the transition back to land without haste. As if she were still submerged under water, she hears the children’s laughter from afar, the chatter of the other women, the call of the swallows, her own pulse. Feels for the first time in weeks quite clearly that she too is alive, not just the athletic dancers on the diving platforms, who plunge into the pool swift as an arrow.

The drops of water trickle down her calves. How differently her heart is beating now, how pleasantly cool her circulation runs. So still that she is almost dizzy.

III

But the frog, Suzanne: what is this title all about? Is "La Grenouille" the nickname of the bather, the term of endearment of the one for the other? Frog because of the spread thighs, because of the jumping power and the hibernation?

You painted with as much defiance as the defiance that it takes to live, you said once.

And painted as many nudes as you wanted, of women as well as men, without a care for the prevailing taboos.

IV

One of the bathers stands entranced under a swimming cap.
The other wears nothing but her knotted hair.

SUZANNE VALADON (1865–1938)

La grenouille (Frog), 1910

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1591

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

CARL BURCKHARDT (1878–1923)

Bather, 1917

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. P 40

Purchased through the Birmann-Fonds in 1917

ROOM 3

PABLO PICASSO (1881–1973)

Femme dans la loge (Woman in the Loge)

(*verso: Buveuse d'absinthe* [The Absinthe Drinker]), 1901

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1411

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR (1841–1919)

Femme dans un jardin (*La femme à la mouette*)

(*Woman in a Garden* [Woman with a Seagull Hat]), 1868

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1988.22

Acquired with a special loan from the Basel government and numerous private contributions in 1988

Marius Glaser is a retired fine arts teacher
at the Olten Cantonal School.

Brushstrokes that Caress, Whip, and Cove

In 1868, Auguste Renoir painted a picture of his twenty-year-old lover. Lise Tréhot is seated elegantly in an armchair, wearing a dark, blue-violet Parisian promenade dress and resting her left hand on a small table. In her right, she holds a light-colored glove. The red coral and gold earrings and the blue-grey seagull hat are striking. Renoir has depicted these fashionable details with precision, and they stand out particularly well against the dark foliage in the background, which is rendered in an animated painterly style.

In contrast, Pablo Picasso's *Femme dans la loge* has a wild and expressive effect. Picasso himself was twenty years old when he created the portrait of the seated lady with bright red-painted lips and a lavish hat. Her severely drawn face appears mask-like and withdrawn. Picasso has only roughly sketched the surroundings with energetic, even violent brushstrokes in blue, yellow, and a few shades of red. The face is clearly recognizable, while in other places the work appears almost abstract, like a painterly experiment.

The *Buveuse d'absinthe* on the reverse side of Picasso's painting forms a stark contrast to this wild application of paint. The colors are muted and applied more flatly; the composition appears calmer. The woman's gaze seems to be directed inwards, her crossed arms signaling distance. This melancholy picture depicts the portrait of an absinthe drinker, an unknown woman on the margins of society in Paris during the Belle Époque.

Thanks to their different coloration and application of paint, the three portraits of Parisian women also convey different content in a temporal context. To my mind, the juxtaposition makes it clear that the design and painting style of a work of art can convey meaning as powerfully as its motif.

ROOM 3

NIKLAUS STOECKLIN (1896–1982)

Sarg-Schreinerei (Coffin-Maker's Shop), 1919

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1631

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (ca. 1497/98–1543)

Two Skulls in a Window Alcove, ca. 1520

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 299

Amerbach-Kabinett 1662

Music

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Dichterliebe op. 48, song cycle based

on poems by Heinrich Heine

no. 16 *Die alten bösen Lieder*

Musicians

Duo Gygli-Domański: The two musicians have been performing as a duo since 2019.

Felix Gygli (baritone) is the winner of the 2023 Kathleen Ferrier Award and a member of the International Opera Studio at the Zurich Opera House. **Tomasz Domański** is a pianist with a focus on lieder accompaniment and correpetition.

Under the Window Cross

The skulls: We're lying here in the window. As if on display. People are frightened when they see us. Their own mortality horrifies them. "What you are, we were. What we are, you will become!"

The coffin: I also feel them shuddering when the people walk past me. The smaller I am, the more terrified they are. Nothing gets to them so much as a child's coffin. But after all, one is old enough to die at any age.

The skulls: We were painted in the sixteenth century. A century of upheaval. Martin Luther sharpens his pen and shakes the world with his words. Magellan sails around it. The Ottoman Empire rises to become a world power. They all reach for the world and have to let it go again.

The coffin: As for me, I was painted in 1919. What sort of time was that? A World War fought with modern means left millions dead. Nothing is as it was. Centers of power shift. The world is changing breathlessly. Technological progress and genocide reveal mankind in all its contradictions.

The skulls: The more they suppress it, the more mercilessly it returns, death. Look at us, who put us here, in this window, so everyone can see us? And do they also see the cross above us? What do they see when they see the cross?

The coffin: They see the symbol of the "Christian West," reduced to a window cross. They see the cross in the newspaper: someone has died. They also look with horror upon the long history of death in Europe, at the misuse of the cross as a military promise of victory: "Under this sign you shall conquer!"

The skulls: And they forget again. The brain we harbor is too weak to retain the memory. That is why we are hollow. Hollow are their assurances. "Never again!" they say, and carve it in stone. But stone is patient and memory only lasts for three generations at most. Then everything starts all over again.

Coffin and skull: "What a wretched human I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal coil?"

ROOM 3

MAURICE DE VLAMINCK (1876–1958)

Côte de mer (Seashore with Rough Waters), ca. 1932

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1602

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

FRANZISKA SCHIRATZKI (*1960)

Strong Water I-III 2013 (Platte), 2022 (Abzug)

Kunstmuseum Basel, Department of Prints and Drawings,

Inv. 2022.123

Purchased with funds from the Foundation for Graphic Art
in Switzerland in 2022

Strong Water

Here are two takes on the elemental power of water. One as the sea. With seeming ease and a quick, impasto application of paint, the post-impressionist Maurice de Vlaminck captures the play of light and shadow on the *Côte de mer*, making the properties of the water almost physically palpable: it roars, the wind whips the waves in all directions, carries the seagulls' low flight. The surf sprays its salty drops in our faces, sticks together the sandy strands of our hair. Where the clouds clear on the horizon, the sun breaks out piercingly in an almost malicious way. Far out in the distance, a sailboat sways lonesomely. Pure drama—a metaphor for the grandeur of nature and the loneliness of man.

The motif of water also appears repeatedly in art history. In Christian times, religiously charged, as the Flood and baptism; in the Renaissance, as a basic element of life; later variously as a metaphor for the relationship between man and nature, almost always as a reflection of social status. Water is fundamental—for life on earth, for all biological processes, for culture, economy, climate. And for art? Like most cultural techniques, it too can hardly do without water.

Water is presented in a completely different way by Franziska Schiratzki in her *Strong Water* series. In the three round aquatints, the liquid element of the etching process itself becomes the protagonist: in subtle tonal gradations, the acid, the medieval *aqua fortis*, makes the spectrum of liquid's motion visible—splashing, dripping, flowing, sloshing, meandering, eroding, displacing, and infiltrating. The traces show the possibilities of the experimental printing technique and, in the sophisticated combination with the round printing plate, also make reference to our vision and our need to fill structures and patterns with meaning: Are we perhaps looking through a microscope? Through a telescope? Are these molecules? Water crystals? Or planetary spheres? Surfaces of celestial bodies, bubbling masses of rock, continents, oceans, primordial seas: *Strong Water* in any case.

Incidentally, both works—the oil painting and the open etching—were created entirely without water.

ROOM 4

PABLO PICASSO (1881–1973)

La guenon et son petit (Baboon and her Young), 1951

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1414

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

ÉDITIONS PAUL-MARTIAL, PARIS (1926–1986)

Front View of a Citroen Automobile, ca. 1928/29

Kunstmuseum Basel, Department of Prints and Drawings,

Inv. 2012.102

Gift of Ruth and Peter Herzog, Basel 2012

David Schaub is eight years old and goes
to school in Binningen.

Monkey Mama or the Face Made of Cars

How would you describe this work by Pablo Picasso?

“I see a monkey mama with a big, smooth backside, holding a small baby in her arms.”

Strictly speaking, it is a baboon. In females, during their fertile period, they get a menstrual swelling. That means that their hairless buttocks bulge outwards. That is why the artist made the female monkey’s bottom so large and smooth.

“The monkey also has a long snout and big, sticking-out ears. If I look closely, I can see that the head is made of two toy cars and that the mother monkey’s eyes are the people sitting in the car on top.”

Exactly, and the monkey’s ears are actually the handles of a clay pot. The round body and shoulders are fragments of a vase, and the tail is a car’s metal spring. So here Picasso brings together several objects to mimic a female baboon.

Do you see any similarities with the photograph?

“In both works of art, there are cars. But the one in the photograph has a different shape. It’s less round and looks old-fashioned. With a little imagination, I can also see a face in the photo: the car lights could be big eyes. The shape of the car reminds me of a long snout—like a crocodile seen from the front.”

Do you also sometimes see faces where there aren’t any in everyday life?

“Yes, when I see cars on the road, I sometimes ask myself how they look. Whether they are looking friendly or fierce or whether they are squinting one eye. Here, the baboon’s face seems friendly, but the car in the picture looks rather sad.”

Artists are sometimes inspired by imaginary faces that appear in everyday things. You can try this too: Look at objects or clouds and try to find a face or a creature in them. Then draw the shape you have seen and then you will have invented your own picture.

ROOM 4

JEAN DUBUFFET (1901–1985)

Effigie rocher fruiteux (Effigy of a Fruitbearing Rock), 1958

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1171

Deposited with the Kunstmuseum Basel in 2004

JEAN DUBUFFET (1901–1985)

Le crapadeur (The toad), 1959

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1964.11

Gift of Werner Schenk, 1964

Maira van Dam is twelve years old and attends
the first secondary school in Binningen.

Stony Beings

When I see the artworks next to each other, I think of people. People, like works of art, are different, no two are alike and yet they all have things in common. Two works of art, created by the same artist, with different materials—one seems happier, friendlier than the other, is rounder and looks more homey, perhaps it lives in a big family. The other work is bonier, sadder or more wistful, older and lonelier. But you can't overlook the similarities either. Both have something stony, craggy, both are missing something if you follow their gaze; they are not angular, and both are unique.

If I wanted to meet them, I would look for them in stony valleys and caves. Maybe there would be more of them too? But they could also live in other places, because they are not really made of stone. One guy is made of paint on canvas, the other of papier-mâché. But who says these creatures are male anyway? Perhaps there is no way of knowing because they are extinct? Is that why they look so distressed?

I would like to ask them how they are doing and what they need. Of course, I would be unsettled if I actually met them, but actually I don't think they would do anyone any harm. But you can't really know that. People know nothing about many things. You don't have to know everything to do something special though. Art knows no boundaries, anything is possible. It doesn't just show what you already know. Artists can create something new, mysterious, and unknown. And that is exactly the case with these two works.

ROOM 5

ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY (1864–1941)

Abstrakter Kopf: Abend (Abstract Head: Evening), 1927

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1261

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

MARIA LA ROCHE (1870–1952)

Kleinbasel unter dem Regenbogen

(Kleinbasel beneath the Rainbow), 1921

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 1773, purchased in 1940

Music

ALBRECHT MOESCHINGER (1897–1985)

Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano

Op. 65, third movement: Allegro

Musicians

Aión Dúo: **Claudia Reyes Segovia** (clarinet) and **Pau Fernández Benlloch** (piano) formed their duo in 2017 at the Sibelius Academy Helsinki. Their focus is on the interpretation of contemporary music. Both musicians completed their master's degrees in Basel and are currently completing further studies at the Basel Academy of Music.

Till Berger is head of the Climate Unit in the
Präsidentdepartement of Basel-Stadt.

At the End of the Rainbow

The rainbow stands for hope and new beginnings. In Maria La Roche's painting, it stretches over Basel, glowing and protective. In Alexej von Jawlensky's *Tête abstraite*, it arches over a dreamer's eye. As different as the paintings may be, they stand for different perspectives on the same theme. For change. For departure into the new.

Basel is no stranger to this topic. Like other cities, it too is in a constant state of renewal, transformation, and further development. But the rainbow stands not only for new beginnings and change, but also for hope. For something desirable and better. Here, a very special new beginning comes into play, on which Basel's electorate decided in 2022: the path to climate neutrality and the goal of producing zero net climate-damaging emissions by 2037.

This path requires the redevelopment of the entire city. Trees will be planted, buildings renovated, and bicycle routes extended. But the net-zero target can only be achieved if people get involved too. Each individual and everyone together. This intersection is where the two images meet and link up with another of the rainbow's associations: the fantastic.

According to legend, at the end of the rainbow is a pot of gold, as a reward for all those, who set out upon the path. Basel, too, is headed toward a richly filled pot in 2037: with cleaner air, lower energy costs, better health, and an even more beautiful and greener living environment.

Let us dream of rainbows.

ROOM 5

ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY (1864–1941)

Meditation no. 33, 1935

Meditation no. 57, 1935

Meditation no. 133, 1935

Im Obersteg Foundation, Inv. Im 1269

Permanent loan to the Kunstmuseum Basel since 2004

JOAN MIRÓ (1893–1983)

Personnages dans la nuit (Figures at Night), 1944

Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1980.45

Gift of Dr. Charles F. Leuthardt, Riehen, 1980

(They Can't Help It)

The meditations are silent, the figures loud
For every picture, you need more than eyes
Every picture is a meditation, whether it looks back
Every picture is a meditation when you look at it
As long as you don't judge it
it is felt
(it can't help it)

Every picture is a meditation when I look at it
Every picture is a meditation when only I look at it
Every picture is a meditation when I only look at it
Night after night anew
The same face, the heads identical
And what's it supposed to be for?
Susan Sontag remains
(she can't help it)

Meditations as sensualities, figures personalities
Meditations are also figures, figures are meditations
Lust for language, lust for shame, loss of language
An orderless rainbow, on which structure comes to rest
What are lines supposed to tell me when tonight is the display
What are edges supposed to tell me when everything is soft in filtering
What are green, blue, red, the tones, supposed to do when lines are the accents
Movements remain when colors have dried
(they can't help it)

How the Chagalls Came to the Kunstmuseum Basel

The Russian-French Jewish painter Marc Chagall is considered one of the most important artistic figures of the twentieth century. There are various reasons why his work is so well represented in the Kunstmuseum Basel. Chagall had his first retrospective show in 1933 here in Basel. It was here, too, that his painting *Die Prise (Rabbiner)* (The Pinch of Snuff [Rabbi]) once again became part of a public collection after being defamed as “degenerate art” in Nazi Germany, confiscated from the Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, and sold at the much-discussed auction at Theodor Fischer in Lucerne in 1939. His daughter Ida Chagall also lived in Basel with her husband Franz Meyer, who was director of the Kunstmuseum from 1962 to 1980.

Provenance research investigates the origins of these works, the history of their ownership, and the fates of their prior owners. How and under what circumstances did Chagall's paintings, sculptures, and works on paper end up in the Kunstmuseum?

Purchase

The painting *Ma fiancée aux gants noir* (My Fiancée with Black Gloves) is a portrait of Chagall's fiancée Bella Chagall. Originally owned by the Hanover gallerist Herbert von Garvens, it came into the possession of the banker Baron Eduard von der Heydt in the 1920s via the art dealers Alfred Flechtheim (Berlin) and Christoph Bernoulli (Basel). Von der Heydt kept it from 1930 to 1950 and it was used to decorate his villa on Monte Verità in Ascona. Twice during this period, the painting was temporarily stored in the depository of the Kunstmuseum. When it was finally put up for sale in 1950, Georg Schmidt, Franz Meyer's predecessor as director, was delighted to have this second chance—for it turned out that the art dealer Bernoulli, who sold the painting to the Baron, had also offered it to the Kunstmuseum before. At that time, however, the offer was not well received, and the painting was considered too expensive. In February 1950, the purchase was made possible with the financial support of a Basel patron.

Tessa Rosebrock heads the Provenance Research Department
at the Kunstmuseum Basel.

Permanent Loan / Deposit

The so-called Jewish portraits from 1914–15 are an important series in Chagall's oeuvre. They depict seated, self-confident beggars, the models for which the painter found in his Russian homeland of Vitebsk. There are a total of four such representations in different colors. The paintings *Jew in Black and White* and *Jew in Red* were once part of the Kagan-Chabchay Collection (Moscow and Paris). In 1936, they were purchased by the Basel shipping contractor Karl Im Obersteg, who was a great admirer of Chagall. Through an exchange of another Chagall painting, *The Wedding*, the *Jew in Green* came into his possession as well, so that today, the Im Obersteg Foundation in fact owns three of the four Jewish portraits. Since 2004, the Im Obersteg collection has been on display at the Kunstmuseum. In terms of ownership, the works remain the private property of the Foundation. They grace the spaces of Basel's public art collection as a permanent loan.

Gift

In 2023, Chagall's granddaughter, Meret Meyer, bequeathed fourteen works on paper and an oil painting on cardboard by her grandfather to the Kunstmuseum. Almost all these works had remained in the family. Only the painting *La prière dans la nuit* (Prayer at night) had been acquired by her on the Swiss art market in 2008. This is the first time these works have been presented publicly in a museum. They were selected deliberately to complement the portrait of Bella Chagall already in the Kunstmuseum's collection.

Gifts are one of the particularly joyful events for a museum—sometimes they come as a surprise, sometimes museums are given a chance to articulate wishes. But they always express a special connection between the artist in question and/or the donors and the institution that holds the cultural assets.

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The Swiss Foundation for Young Musicians (FYM) was founded in Basel in 2012. The foundation supports young musicians on their path onto the concert stage and into professional life, either during or immediately after concluding their studies. The foundation's headquarters, Spalenvorstadt 25, Basel, are regularly host to concerts with young musicians. foryoungmusicians.ch

Selection of the musical contributions and the musicians for the exhibition:
Isabel Heusser, artistic and administrative director of the FYM.

**FOR
YOUNG
MUSICIANS**

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