

Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Press Release

Harvard Art Museums Receive Significant Gift of German Drawings and Prints



Georg Baselitz, *Untitled*, 1967. Black and red chalk and graphite on paper. Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Dorette Hildebrand-Staab, 2020.100. Artwork © Georg Baselitz. Photo: Lynette Roth; © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

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The Harvard Art Museums are pleased to announce an extraordinary gift of nearly 50 works by major figures in postwar German art from the collector Dorette Hildebrand-Staab, a member of the German Friends of the Busch-Reisinger Museum. The works include drawings by such notable artists as Georg Baselitz, Joseph Beuys, Antonius Höckelmann, Jörg Immendorff, Imi Knoebel, Sigmar Polke, and Eugen Schönebeck, as well as a suite of prints and multiples by these and other artists such as Hanne Darboven, A. R. Penck, and Dieter Roth. Dating roughly from the 1950s to 1980s, these works were made when many of these now-renowned artists were students at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Berlin or the Düsseldorf Art Academy. In addition to the postwar works, a selection of late 18th- to early 19th-century etchings by German printmaker Carl Wilhelm Kolbe are also part of the gift.

“Dr. Hildebrand-Staab often purchased works directly from artists—Baselitz in particular, whose work she first saw in 1965,” said Lynette Roth, the Daimler Curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum and Head of the Division of Modern and Contemporary Art. “Her gift thus offers evidence of a collecting practice around many of these artists as they emerged in Germany in the 1960s, long before they became known to American audiences in the early 1980s through New York gallery shows and museum exhibitions.”

Born largely during World War II and coming of age in the 1960s, the artists represented in the gift were among the first to deal directly with their country’s fascist past. They did so often via provocative, perverse, or humorous subject matter. In 1961/62, for example, Baselitz and Schönebeck closely collaborated on their *Pandemonium Manifestos*, lurid surrealist tracts that, like their imagery at that time, criticized German postwar society for suppressing the horrors of the Nazi period and the Holocaust.

According to Hildebrand-Staab, the gift is offered as a “bridge between the United States and Germany, in gratitude for American support of the country after 1945, but also to remind new generations of this longstanding relationship.”

The artworks build directly on Hildebrand-Staab’s earlier gift of a 1964 painting by Baselitz *Saxon Motif* as well as two drawings (by Baselitz and Penck), donated as part of the Friends Anniversary Collection, a 2008 initiative designed to strengthen the Busch-Reisinger Museum’s holdings of art made after 1960. The Busch-Reisinger Museum is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries.

The current gift includes the first works by Schönebeck to enter the museums’ collections. Two early drawings by Beuys—one from 1949, while he was a student at the Düsseldorf Art Academy—complement the Busch-Reisinger’s near-complete collection of the artist’s editioned artworks, or multiples. Works by two of Beuys’s students in Düsseldorf—subtle geometric forms by Imi Knoebel, and three satirical missives by Jörg Immendorff—are the first drawings by these artists to enter the collections.

Works by Polke in the current gift, including five drawings from the mid- to late 1960s and the 1968 portfolio *Higher Beings Command*, comprising fourteen offset lithographs and four unique drawings, notably expand the Museum’s holdings of German pop art. Polke’s critiques of the so-called West German “economic miracle” and the country’s rampant consumerism are drawn on paper from a standard, inexpensive writing pad. Often employing the vernacular of cartoons and comic strips, Polke’s technical approach was deliberately crude; akin to Immendorff’s preference for colored markers, Polke used ballpoint or felt-tipped pens. In a work in graphite and watercolor from 1968, Polke takes on “modern art,” poking fun at the abstraction that had dominated the West German art scene since the first *documenta* in 1955.

“Dr. Hildebrand-Staab’s continued generosity and support of the Busch-Reisinger Museum will greatly benefit students, scholars, and visitors from around the world,” said Martha Tedeschi, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums. “This significant gift broadens our collections and provides further opportunities for study and appreciation, integral to our teaching and research mission.”

About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums house one of the largest and most renowned art collections in the United States, comprising three museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) and four research centers (the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the

Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Fogg Museum includes Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum, unique among North American museums, is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum is focused on Asian art, Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern art, and Islamic and later Indian art. Together, the collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in the United States. The Harvard Art Museums have a rich tradition of considering the history of objects as an integral part of the teaching and study of art history, focusing on conservation and preservation concerns as well as technical studies. harvardartmuseums.org

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