
Kunsthalle Basel Camille Graeser Lectures 2019

EN

Exhibition and Archive Histories Symposium

9.11.2019
Saturday
2–7 pm



Opening
OOY, *Camille, Zeitgenossen,
Geophila, Trauerstein*, Kunsthalle Basel, 1933
Photo: Jacky Bass / Kunsthalle Basel

What can archives reveal about an institution's exhibitions? Its publics? Even art history more broadly? This afternoon-long symposium devoted to exhibition and archive histories takes as its starting point the vast holdings of the Kunsthalle Basel Photo Archive, containing photographic documentation of more than one hundred years of its exhibitions. The gathering of international speakers and specialists explores several periods in the institution's history, loosely connected to the exhibition-makers whose visions defined their respective eras at Kunsthalle Basel. But the implications of these lectures stretch far



Opening
Vincent Peccoreau, *You Have Did the Right Thing When You
Put That Skylight In*, Kunsthalle Basel, 2015
Photo: Philipp Hänggi / Kunsthalle Basel

beyond one localized institutional context and serve as illustrative case studies about exhibition histories and archives at large, as well as close art historical readings of several modern art movements.

The symposium is given in the context of the Camille Graeser Lectures, named for the Swiss artist Camille Graeser (1892—1980), whose foundation has been among those that have kindly provided support for the digitalization of the Photo Archive of Kunsthalle Basel; in this case it also supports the scholarly research made public through this event.

Bruce Altshuler
Exhibition History, Institutional Archives, and the Museum

Over the past three decades the history of exhibitions has become a highly active field of research, part of a broadening of art historical investigation from the individual artist and artwork to the greater system within which art is produced, distributed, and valued both aesthetically and financially. Research on the history of exhibitions is grounded fundamentally in the archives of institutions of display, the documents and images from which a wide variety of narratives can be constructed. And such narratives increasingly have found their way into museum galleries.

This presentation will discuss sources of the growing interest in exhibition history, and the ways in which those histories have played different explanatory roles within a variety of cultural and art historical stories. From this analytic account we will move to consider a range of institutional projects employing archival materials, including those of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, US. The emphasis will be on the use of photographic archives, including that of Kunsthalle Basel.

Bruce Altshuler is director of the Program in Museum Studies at New York University, US. He is the author of *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions That Made Art History, 1962–2002* (Phaidon, 2013); *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions That Made Art History, 1863–1959* (Phaidon, 2008); *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition* (University of California Press, 1998); *Isamu Noguchi* (Abbeville, 1994); and editor of *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art* (Princeton University Press, 2005). He holds a PhD in philosophy from Harvard University, Cambridge, US, and has been a member of the graduate faculty of the Bard Center for Curatorial Studies, Annandale, US, and the board of directors of the US section of Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art (AICA-USA).

Felix Thürlemann
Zwei Titel, zwei Kataloge, zwei Ausstellungen: konkrete kunst (1944) in der Kunsthalle Basel als Reprise von konstruktivisten (1937)
 (Engl. Two Titles, Two Catalogues, Two Exhibitions: *konkrete kunst* [1944] as a Reprise of the Kunsthalle Basel Exhibition *konstruktivisten* [1937])

Anyone who considers the two group exhibitions *konstruktivisten* (Engl. constructivists) from 1937 and *konkrete kunst* (Engl. concrete art) from 1944 at Kunsthalle Basel will be surprised at how closely related the two exhibitions are. Almost half of the artists are represented in both exhibitions, sometimes even with the same works. Max Bill, who installed the 1944 exhibition, also ensured that its catalogue corresponded exactly to the 1937 version, designed by Jan Tschichold, in the choice of typography and the presentation of the (partly identical) illustrations.

Only when one takes a closer look at the installation views of the two exhibitions, preserved in the Photo Archive of Kunsthalle Basel, do clear differences become visible. In particular, the photograph of the last room in the exhibition *konkrete kunst* with works by Jean (Hans) Arp, Piet Mondrian, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp shows how a subtle hanging or “positioning” of the works—presumably the result of a close collaboration between Max Bill and Jean (Hans) Arp—turned the exhibition into an effective instrument for interpreting the works on view.

Felix Thürlemann was professor of art history at the University of Konstanz, DE, from 1987 to 2014. His research interests include visual semiotics, early Dutch painting, and the history of photography. His publications include *Mehr als ein Bild: für eine Kunstgeschichte des <hyperimage>* (Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2013), published in English as *More Than One Picture: An Art History of the Hyperimage* (Getty Publications, 2019), *Das Haremsfenster: Zur fotografischen Eroberung Ägyptens im 19. Jahrhundert* (Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2016), and *Konstruierte Wirklichkeiten: die fotografische Montage 1839–1900*, which he co-authored with Bernd Stiegler (Schwabe Verlag, 2019).

Nora Fiechter
Kunst am Puls der Zeit ausstellen.
Arnold Rüdlinger und der Abstrakte
Expressionismus
 (Engl. Exhibiting Art at the Pulse of Time.
 Arnold Rüdlinger and Abstract Expressionism)

The travelling show *The New American Painting* organized by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, US, which opened as *Die neue amerikanische Malerei* at Kunsthalle Basel in 1958, went down in twentieth-century exhibition history. However, the contribution of Arnold Rüdlinger (officially then Kunsthalle Basel's "conservator") to the exhibition has received little critical attention.

In the mid-1950s Abstract Expressionism, a then entirely new art movement, was still largely unknown in Europe. And, despite Rüdlinger's interest even before he took up his position at Kunsthalle Basel, he had not succeeded in finding a way to exhibit the movement. But news of his extraordinary interest and knowledge spread, and it was because of his tenacity to bring this new aesthetic to Basel that the MoMA collaboration could be realized. Within it, Rüdlinger played a fundamental role, which was pivotal as well to the international success of Abstract Expressionism after the exhibition.

Nora Fiechter lectures and undertakes curatorial and mediation projects in the field of art. She studied art history at the UNIL Université de Lausanne, CH, and for both her master's thesis and her dissertation (completed in 2019) researched the reception of the exhibition *Die neue amerikanische Malerei* as presented in 1958 at Kunsthalle Basel. Comparative research on exhibition histories also led her to Australia for four years on a Swiss National Science Foundation scholarship.

Adam Szymczyk
Für Veränderungen aller Art ...
Kunsthalle Basel as Open Space

Peter F. Althaus's exhibition program at Kunsthalle Basel between 1968 and 1973 was both innovative and controversial. Formerly editor of the magazine *Kunstnachrichten* and longtime director of the Kunstmuseum Luzern, he was an experienced museum expert who wanted to break new ground in Basel. With exhibitions such as *Für Veränderungen aller Art* (Engl. For Changes of All Kinds) from 1969 and *Das offene Museum – die Stadt* (Engl. The Open Museum – the City) from 1970, Althaus tested experimental exhibition formats that responded to virulent political questions of the time and pushed institutional limits.

While Harald Szeemann concluded his tenure at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969 with *When Attitudes Become Form*, an exhibition addressing then new developments in US-American and European minimal and conceptual art, Althaus aimed for something different. In his work, the idea of open discourse was less concerned with the evolution of form than with the conditions of production within an institutional space and questioning thereof. In addition to exhibitions such as *Information* from 1969 and *Moden* (Engl. Fashions) from 1973, the radical project *Offener Saal* (Engl. Open Gallery) from 1971–72 met with incomprehension and criticism, and was ultimately closed down. Shortly after this episode, Althaus left Kunsthalle Basel.

Adam Szymczyk was artistic director of documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel, DE, in 2017. In 1997, he co-founded the Foksal Gallery Foundation in Warsaw. He was director of Kunsthalle Basel from 2003 to 2014. In 2008 he co-curated with Elena Filipovic the 5th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. He is a board member of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and a member of the international art advisory committee of Kontakt. The Art Collection of Erste Group and ERSTE Foundation in Vienna. He is guest lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig, DE. In 2011, he received the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement from the Menil Collection, Houston, US.

Program

2–2:20 pm	Introductions Elena Filipovic, director of Kunsthalle Basel, in English Roman Kurzmeyer, board member of the Camille Graeser Stiftung, in German Sören Schmeling, head of the Photo Archive of Kunsthalle Basel, in German
2:20–3:20 pm	Bruce Altshuler Exhibition History, Institutional Archives, and the Museum Keynote lecture, in English
3:20–4:20 pm	Felix Thürlemann Zwei Titel, zwei Kataloge, zwei Ausstellungen: <i>konkrete kunst</i> (1944) in der Kunsthalle Basel als Reprise von <i>konstruktivisten</i> (1937) (Engl. Two Titles, Two Catalogues, Two Exhibitions: <i>konkrete kunst</i> [1944] as a Reprise of the Kunsthalle Basel Exhibition <i>konstruktivisten</i> [1937]) Lecture, in German
4:20–4:45 pm	Coffee Break
4:45–5:45 pm	Nora Fiechter Kunst am Puls der Zeit ausstellen. Arnold Rüdlinger und der Abstrakte Expressionismus (Engl. Exhibiting Art at the Pulse of Time. Arnold Rüdlinger and Abstract Expressionism) Lecture, in German
5:45–6:45 pm	Adam Szymczyk <i>Für Veränderungen aller Art ...</i> Kunsthalle Basel as Open Space Lecture, in English
6:45–7 pm	Closing remarks Elena Filipovic, director of Kunsthalle Basel, in English

There will be time for questions after each lecture.

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