



Heinz Berggruen

A dealer and his collection

Picasso – Klee – Matisse – Giacometti. Masterpieces of
the Museum Berggruen/Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin

Paul Klee,
Landscape in Blue
[*Landschaft in Blau*], 1917

From 2 October 2024 to 27 January 2025
Musée de l'Orangerie

Born into a Jewish family in Berlin, Heinz Berggruen left Germany for the United States in 1936 due to Nazi persecution, before settling in Paris after the Second World War. There, he opened his gallery on rue de l'Université, specialising in graphic art by modern artists. His passion soon led him to forge contacts with the Parisian cultural sphere, meeting artists to exhibit as well as the poets, dealers, historians, critics and collectors of the time. Berggruen made a name for himself in the capital and, thanks to his significant success, became its "best client".

From monographs to thematic areas of focus, the exhibition above all highlights Berggruen's personal and particular tastes. Structured around Heinz Berggruen and

the choices, encounters and affinities that dictated the way his collection was put together, the exhibition route showcases a collection covering virtually the entire careers of Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee, as well as Henri Matisse's paper cut-outs and Alberto Giacometti's sculptures. There is a particular resonance between this vast ensemble, given to the German state in 2000 a few years before the collector's death, and the Walter-Guillaume collection at the Musée de l'Orangerie. Around one hundred masterpieces by Picasso, Klee, Matisse and Giacometti shine a new light on this key figure of the Parisian art market in the second half of the 20th century.

Claire Bernardi
Director of the Musée de l'Orangerie

Timeline

1914-1935

Berggruen was born on 6 January 1914 in Wilmersdorf, a district in the centre-west of Berlin, to middle-class Jewish parents. He went on to study literature and journalism,

first in Berlin and then in Grenoble and Toulouse, in France. Returning to Germany, he published the occasional article in newspapers. With the Nazi regime on the rise, he was no longer able to sign his articles with

his own name and had to leave Germany for the United States, where he won a grant to study at the University of Berkeley in California.

1939

In San Francisco, he met an American woman, Lillian Zellerbach. They married and had two children, John and Helen. He began working at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,



1

“Picasso... and others”

The works on display reflect Heinz Berggruen's personal taste. His collection, which he put together over nearly 60 years, features more than 120 works by Picasso, covering virtually his entire career, more than 60 pieces by Klee and many others by Matisse – namely his paper cut-outs –, as well as sculptures by Giacometti, a few Cubist pieces by Georges Braque and some works by Paul Cézanne. Other works by Vincent van Gogh and Georges Seurat were included in the ensemble before the collector parted from them in 2000. The selection presented at the Musée de l'Orangerie illustrates the cohesion of this collection, covering the key milestones of 20th century modern European art.



2

Still lifes

Heinz Berggruen was fascinated by Cubism and set about assembling an overview of the movement through a selection of still lifes. In the same vein as Cézanne, the works he purchased by Picasso and Braque – particularly those arising from early Cubism (1909-1912) and its more synthetic developments – illustrate how these artists deconstructed and reconstructed reality on their canvas.

1

John Gutman,
*Heinz Berggruen in
San Francisco, 1939*

2

Henri Matisse,
Vegetal Elements, 1947

3

Pablo Picasso,
*Glass, Bouquet, Guitar
and Bottle, 1919*

where he assisted the Mexican artist Diego Rivera. He met the painter Frida Kahlo – by then divorced from Rivera – with whom he had an affair lasting several weeks.

1940-1945

In 1940, in Chicago, Berggruen purchased his first artwork, a drawing by Klee (*Phanton Perspective*, 1920, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art), which

he long considered his talisman. At the end of the war, he returned to Germany in American military uniform, having been naturalised during his time in the United States.

1947

For a short time, he contributed to the Munich-based newspaper *Heute* ("Today"), before moving to Zurich and then Paris, where he was given an administrative role at UNESCO, which

he quickly tired of. He became familiar with the art market and set up as an art dealer. He opened his first gallery and bookshop on place Dauphine, on Île de la Cité.



1950

He moved into his gallery on rue de l'Université. He met Tristan Tzara and Paul Éluard, and made the acquaintance of Picasso, Matisse and Giacometti.

1952

He devoted his gallery's first major exhibition to the etchings of Klee and published the first of his self-published catalogues.

1953

He was the first in France to exhibit Matisse's "paper cut-outs". His gallery soon attracted other artists, as well as many key figures from the Parisian and international cultural

sphere. Thanks to his considerable commercial success, he began to amass a private collection of works by the artists he exhibited.

1961

He married the German actress Bettina Moissi, with whom he had two sons, Nicolas and Olivier.



4

Multiple faces and human figures

Picasso occupies a special place in the collection of Heinz Berggruen, who was particularly fond of his portraits, especially his experiments from the years 1906-1907 leading to Cubism, and later to a more assertive visual style in the 1930s. The selection also illustrates Berggruen's propensity for identifying and assembling pieces that, each in their own way, examine the human psyche and how the artists in the collection approach the challenge of representing the human body. The variety of techniques, poses and styles used illustrates the singularity of each of these artistic approaches.

Abstract territories

Heinz Berggruen considered Paul Klee the other grand master of modern art, alongside Picasso. Exploring the space between abstraction and figuration, Klee created abstract landscapes and compositions through his various technical experiments, forming a new visual language. Although Berggruen – who was in exile in California when the artist died in Switzerland in 1940 – never met him, he continued to acquire a large number of works made mainly between 1919 and 1938, when the artist was teaching at the Bauhaus school. His very first purchase as a collector was a piece by Klee, *Phantom Perspective*, which he considered his "talismán". He even dedicated the first exhibition at his new gallery on rue de l'Université to the artist in 1952, accompanied by the very first catalogue self-published by Berggruen. He would continue to exhibit him regularly until the end of his career as a gallery. In fact, Klee was the artist whom Berggruen exhibited most, along with Picasso and Matisse.

1981-1996

In the early 1980s, Berggruen retired as an art dealer. He continued to develop his personal collection, however, and began to consider its future destination. He donated a great deal

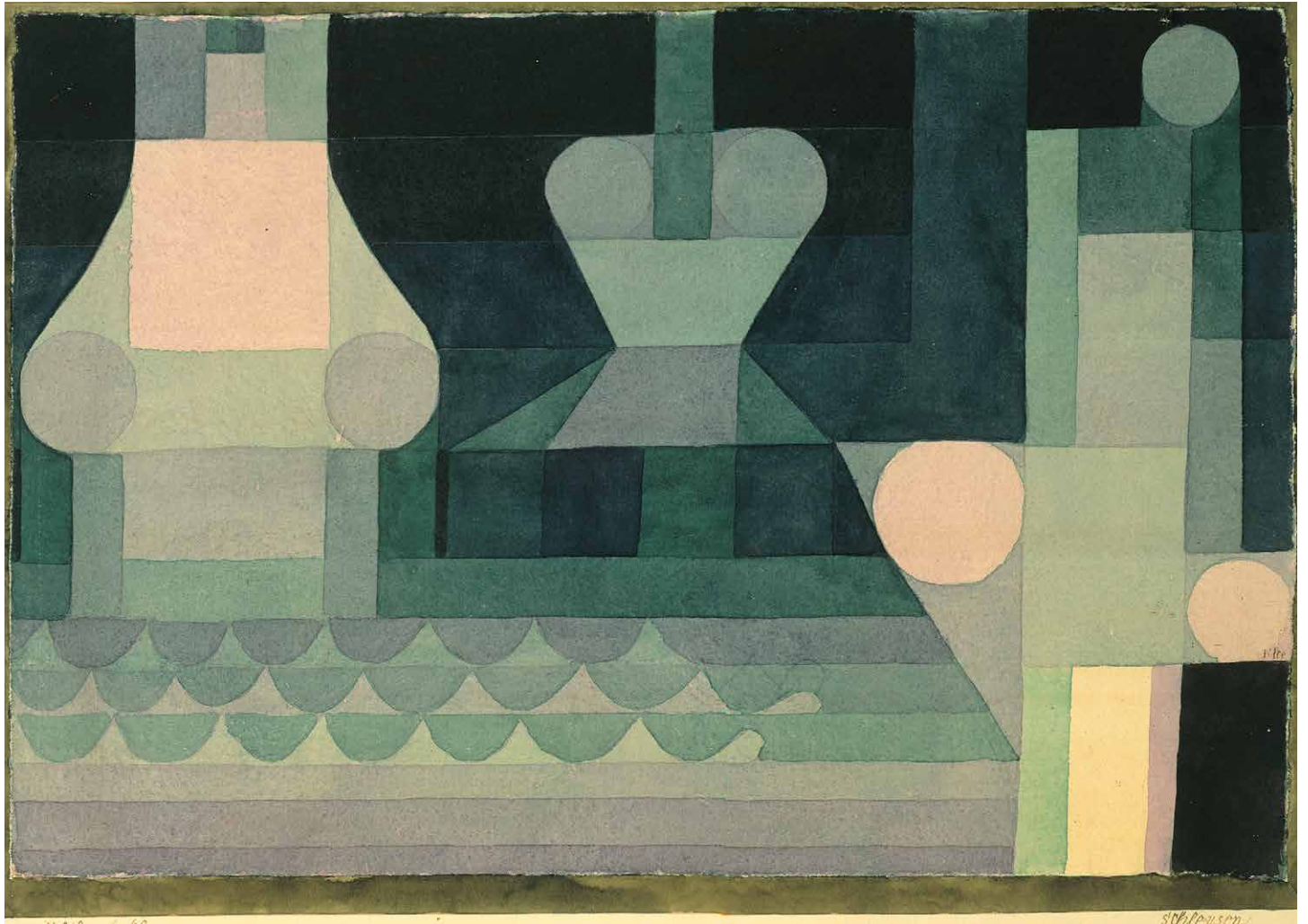
of works by Klee to both the Musée national d'Art moderne in Paris (1972) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1984). His collection was exhibited in several museums, including the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire

in Geneva (1988) and the National Gallery in London (from 1991 to 1996). In order to focus his collection on 20th century art, he parted with masterpieces by Seurat, Cézanne and Van Gogh.

1996

Berggruen reconciled with his homeland, moving back to Berlin. His collection was unveiled in Charlottenburg with the title of "The Berggruen Collection - Picasso

and his Time". It was a resounding success, and the Berlin State Museums purchased it in 2000, via the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation.



4

Pablo Picasso,
The Yellow Sweater, 1939

5

Paul Klee,
Floodgates [Schleusen], 1922

2004

On Berggruen's ninetieth birthday, the building and its collection were renamed the Museum Berggruen.

2007

Berggruen died on 23 February in Neuilly-sur-Seine, at the age of 93.

Collector, gallerist and publisher

After his first gallery on the Île de la Cité in Paris, Heinz Berggruen opened "Berggruen & C^{ie}" in 1950 at 70, rue de l'Université, a much larger exhibition space, and became a major player on the Parisian post-war arts scene. The gallery developed an eclectic programme, initially showcasing works of Dadaist and Surrealist art, followed by masters – Picasso, Matisse, Joan Miró – and artists lesser known at the time, including Kurt Schwitters, Karel Appel and Pierre Soulages.

One of the elements that made the Berggruen & C^{ie} gallery unique was the catalogues that accompanied the exhibitions. Berggruen published (and self-published, in some cases), over one hundred of them between 1952 and 1998. Recognisable for their elongated shape, these little "brochures", which list the works on display and include images of some of them, are introduced by short text written by some of the most influential figures of the artistic and literary sphere at the time, including Tériade, Michel Seuphor, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Jacques Prévert, Douglas Cooper and Tristan Tzara. The Museum Berggruen still has a few of these catalogues, featuring handwritten annotations by the art dealer, mainly as a way to keep track of his sales, for example by noting down the sale price of a work, or the name of the buyer.

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Cover of the Berggruen & C^{ie} gallery catalog *Paul Klee, 24 gravures, collages*, n° 1, 1952

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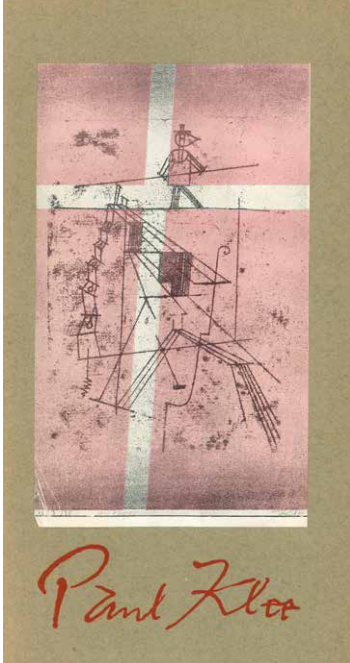
Henri Matisse, cover of the Berggruen & C^{ie} gallery catalog *Henri Matisse, papiers découpés*, n° 3, 1953

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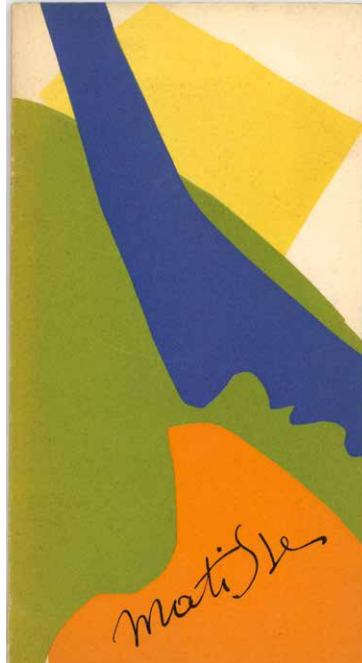
Cover of the Berggruen & C^{ie} gallery catalog *Georges Braque graveur*, n° 5, October 1953

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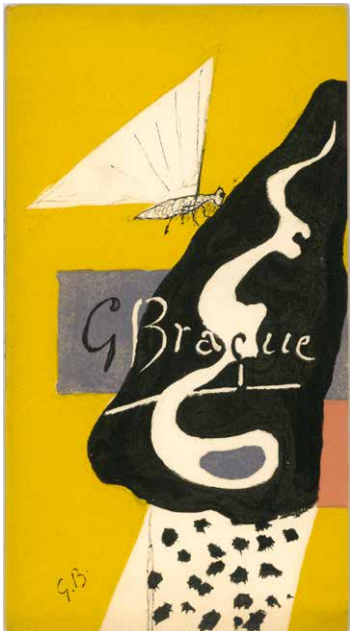
Cover of the Berggruen & C^{ie} gallery catalog *Paul Klee*, n° 33, 1961



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Heinz Berggruen in the rotunda
of the Stülerbau, 1999

Around the exhibition

Tours

Audioguide (French, English)

Full price €6 / Concessions
or members €4

Guided tours (French, English, LSF)

Full price €10 / Concessions
or members €6

Family workshops

Full price €10 / Concessions
or members €6

Publications

Exhibition catalogue

co-published by the Musée d'Orsay
et de l'Orangerie/Flammarion,
192 pages, €39.

Explore

Study day

Tuesday 8 October 2024, 2.30 pm,
Musée de l'Orangerie and
Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art,
free upon reservation

Watch or listen to the interview with
the curators, available as a video
and podcast, and see the articles
and programme of tours, workshops
and events around the exhibition:



Programme and bookings

musee-orangerie.fr



Chief Curator

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the Musée de l'Orangerie
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the Museum Berggruen

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Guillaume Fabius, Conservation
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l'Orangerie
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In media partnership with
Le Figaro, Le Point, LCI, Arte.

Exhibition organised by
the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris
with scientific collaboration
and exceptional loans from
the Museum Berggruen/Neue
Nationalgalerie Berlin



**MUSEUM
BERGGRUEN**

Publication directors:

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Établissement Public du Musée d'Orsay
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de l'Orangerie.

Design: Visitor services department.

Editorial supervision: Publications
department.

Design: Marie Pellaton.

Layout: Communications department.

Printing: on recycled paper, Fabrègue,
August 2024.

© Établissement public du musée
d'Orsay et du musée de l'Orangerie –
Valéry-Giscard-d'Estaing, 2024

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