

ART IS PUBLIC

FROM KUNSTVEREIN TO KUNSTHALLE

1817 — THE BEGINNINGS OF THE KUNSTVEREIN

A small circle of Hamburg citizens meets regularly in the house of lieutenant colonel David Christopher Mettlerkamp (1774–1850), a Hamburg businessman and art collector. They study and discuss drawings and engravings from their own private collections. The surge of local patriotism following the French occupation stimulates the citizens' cultural commitment.

1822 — OFFICIAL CHARTER

The now nineteen male members of the Kunstverein relocate their meetings to the art gallery of Georg Ernst Harzen (1790–1863) at Große Johannisstrasse 148. They adopt statutes and keep a minute book.

Extract from the Statutes:

§ 1

The aim of the Kunstverein (art association) is to inform the public about the fine arts by using a variety of means.

§ 2

For the time being, the Kunstverein will meet on Mondays. Meetings will begin at seven p.m. and finish at ten p.m. The first meeting will take place on 4th February 1822. ...

1826 — FIRST PUBLIC EXHIBITION

The sales exhibition in 1826 marks the beginning of the Kunstverein's systematic exhibition activities. It revives public interest in art in Hamburg and offers young artists a platform. Usually, a large exhibition of contemporary art is organised every two years.

— »GEMÄLDE-VERLOOSUNGS-VEREIN«

In the same year, the Kunstverein founds the »Gemälde-Verloosungs-Verein« (a lottery association offering paintings as prizes) which remains linked to the Kunstverein (with the exception of a period of separation in the years 1837–1847). The membership fees are used for the active promotion of art. Every year, works by German artists are acquired and distributed in a prize draw amongst the members.

1830 — EDITIONS FOR THE MEMBERS

From 1830 onwards the Kunstverein regularly sends printed editions to its members. They are mostly reproductions of paintings and are frequently commissioned by the Kunstverein.

1836 — THE KUNSTVEREIN'S OWN COLLECTION

The study of art works is a regular feature at the Kunstverein gatherings. Over time, the various acquisitions and donations of prints and drawings grow into a serious collection, which is available to the members. In 1891, the Kunstverein donates its prints to the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Kunsthalle.

In the absence of a public picture gallery in Hamburg, the Kunstverein decides to extend its purchases to paintings. Members contribute to the growing collection by donating works. In 1850, the paintings collection is exhibited in the Börsenarkaden and constitutes, since 1869, the foundation of the Kunsthalle collection.

1842 — FIRST EXHIBITION OF »OLDER MASTERS«

In this exhibition the Kunstverein shows, for the first time, the private collections of Hamburg art collectors in the theatre building (located where the State Opera is built today).

— GREAT FIRE OF HAMBURG

In the Great Fire from 5 to 8 May the theatre with the current exhibition of the Kunstverein remains unscathed which saves the loaned works. For the next four years, the aftermath of the fire prevents further exhibitions. The exhibition activities are not resumed until 1847.

1847 — MERGING WITH THE »GEMÄLDE-VERLOOSUNGS-VEREIN«

After ten years of separate administration the Kunstverein and the »Gemälde-Verloosungs-Verein« merge under the name of Kunstverein in Hamburg (Art Association in Ham-

burg). The same year, the exhibition activities are resumed on new premises rented from the Patriotische Gesellschaft (Patriotic Society).

1848 — OPENING UP TO A WIDER PUBLIC

In the year of the 1848 revolution, the Kunstverein abolishes the rule that new candidates have to receive approval by the majority of existing members for their admission. Upon payment of an annual fee of 15 Mark Courant (equalling about 200€ today), every citizen can now become a member. The association counts 467 members, including 30 women.

— »PERMANENT EXHIBITION«

The merging with the »Gemälde-Verloosungs-Verein« in the previous year leads to the creation of the »Permanent Exhibition«. In this sales exhibition, the Kunstverein regularly purchases pictures for its prize draws. At the same time, the »Permanent Exhibition« is an important platform for artists to sell their works. Works sold are regularly replaced by new ones. This leads to frequent changes in the display and makes the exhibition very popular.

1850 — »PUBLIC CITY ART GALLERY«

The Kunstverein establishes the first public picture gallery in Hamburg. For this purpose, the city temporarily provides premises in the Börsenarkaden (stock exchange arcades). Acquisitions by the Kunstverein and donations from numerous citizens contribute to the growing collection.

1852 — MERGING THE LOCATIONS

The Kunstverein's »Permanent Exhibition« moves into the Börsenarkaden, joining the »Städtische Gemälde-Galerie«. Access is now also granted to non-members against payment of an admission fee. In addition, the Kunstverein establishes a reading room which develops into an extensive art library. Here, the most important English, French and German art journals are available to obtain information about the international art scene.

1863–69 — FOUNDING OF THE HAMBURGER KUNSTHALLE

The long-standing efforts of the Kunstverein to find suitable premises for the »Städtische Gemälde-Galerie« finally

result in the construction of an art museum (Kunsthalle) for the city. The foundations are laid in 1863; on 30 August 1869 the building is opened to the public.

The »Städtische Gemälde-Galerie« is transferred to the Kunsthalle; the Kunstverein is given rooms for their administration and a room on the upper floor for its »Permanent Exhibition«. Subject to prior agreement, temporary exhibitions may be arranged in other galleries of the Kunsthalle.

1884 — RELOCATION OF THE »PERMANENT EXHIBITION«

Owing to reconstruction works in the Kunsthalle, the Kunstverein relocates the »Permanent Exhibition« to the city centre: Until 1899 it is on show in two rooms of the newly constructed annexe of the stock exchange building.

1886 — A DIRECTOR FOR THE KUNSTHALLE

The Kunstverein supports the choice of Alfred Lichtwark (1852–1914) as the first director of the Kunsthalle. Lichtwark is a member of the Kunstverein and is involved in many of its exhibitions. Regular art purchases for the Kunsthalle, continuing until Lichtwark's death in 1914, testify to the joint efforts of the Kunstverein and the Kunsthalle to promote the arts in Hamburg.

1891 — SEPARATE FUNCTIONS OF KUNSTHALLE AND KUNSTVEREIN

The Kunstverein transfers both its collection of historic prints and its library to the Kunsthalle. Several thousand prints and almost 350 periodicals change ownership. While the Kunsthalle's main activity is collecting art, only sometimes showing small temporary exhibitions, the Kunstverein considers its core purpose to organise regular exhibitions.

1894 — »GROSSE KUNST-AUSSTELLUNG«

Until 1897, the Kunstverein annually organises the »Grosse Kunst-Ausstellung« (Great Art Exhibition) during which the works of more than 300 Hamburg, German and international artists are displayed on the upper floor of the Kunsthalle. The exhibition attracts up to 32,000 visitors during the eight-week exhibition period.

1899 — SEPARATE EXHIBITION PREMISES

The Kunstverein leases its own exhibition rooms at Neuer Wall 14. In addition to three richly ornamented skylight rooms for the display of paintings and sculptures, there are four further rooms to exhibit craft objects such as furniture, glass and metalwork. The Kunstverein thus seeks to stimulate modern decorative art. Until 1901 the number of members increases to 1755.

1914–18 — BACK TO THE KUNSTHALLE

In 1914 the Kunstverein is obliged to vacate its exhibition rooms at Neuer Wall, as the rented building is to be demolished. After provisional accommodation in a school, the Kunstverein returns to the Kunsthalle in 1916. The applied arts section is closed for lack of space. The exhibition activities continue during the war but with a focus on local art.

1920s — THE CRISIS YEARS

The economic hardship of the post-war inflation years leads to a decline in membership and financial losses for the Kunstverein. Back at the Kunsthalle, in small cabinet rooms in the newly built extension, the Kunstverein mostly exhibits local works and graphic art. In view of these limiting circumstances the Kunstverein fears to become an art institution of merely local relevance.

1927 — EXHIBITION »EUROPEAN CONTEMPORARY ART«

In celebration of its long history the Kunstverein organises an extensive international exhibition of contemporary art in the Kunsthalle. After the years of economic depression, this exhibition is intended to stimulate the local art scene and to restore Hamburg to its position as a vibrant art city.

1930/31 — NEW RABENSTRASSE 25

The Kunstverein moves into exhibition premises of its own in a former villa. The city advances the funds for the necessary modifications realised by the architect Karl Schneider (1892–1945). The design, following Bauhaus influences, reflects latest standards for the presentation of art. In 1931, the art historian Hildebrand Gurlitt (1895–1956) becomes managing director and curator of the Kunstvere-

in. He exhibits German Expressionists and adds new subject areas to the exhibition programme such as stage design and architecture.

1933 — THE KUNSTVEREIN DURING THE »THIRD REICH«

In the year Hitler seizes power, the Kunstverein is placed under the control of the central Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture). As in the Kunsthalle, conformity enforced by the Nazis results in the resignation of the Kunstverein's board members. Jewish members are no longer permitted to exhibit their art and are forced to leave the association. However, until 1936, the Kunstverein attempts, even under the new board's regime, to exhibit moderately progressive art.

1936/37 — CLOSING OF THE EXHIBITION AND SALE OF THE PREMISES

Eleven days after its opening the Kunstverein's exhibition »Painting and Sculpture in Germany 1936« is closed by the Nazi authorities. The board of the Kunstverein is replaced by supporters of the Nazi regime. Due to financial deficits, the premises in the Neue Rabenstraße are sold at auction. In 1937, the Kunstverein moves back into the Kunsthalle.

1940 — EXHIBITION »CONTEMPORARY GERMAN SCULPTORS«

Unlike the Kunsthalle, which has almost entirely ceased its exhibition activities since the outbreak of the war, the Kunstverein continues to organise exhibitions until 1945. In 1940, the large exhibition »Contemporary German Sculptors« presents more than 200 works in line with the Nazi conception of art.

1945/46 — A NEW PUBLIC PRESENCE OF THE ARTS

After World War II, the Kunstverein obtains the permission of the occupying British forces to reorganise itself. The pre-1933 statutes are reinstated. As early as 1946, the Kunstverein continues its exhibition activities in the Kunsthalle. In the same year, the new director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Carl Georg Heise, becomes a member of the board of the Kunstverein. Both institutions revive their founding principle to create a civic public sphere for the arts. By

means of acquisitions and exhibitions they attempt the rehabilitation of modern art.

1955 — EXHIBITION »NEW ACQUISITIONS OF THE HAMBURGER KUNSTHALLE«

On the occasion of the retirement of Carl Georg Heise, director of the Kunsthalle since 1945, the Kunstverein organises a large exhibition of the museum's recent acquisitions. The event takes place in the Kunsthalle and highlights the partnership between the two institutions in the new era after the war.

SINCE 1963 — SPATIAL SEPARATION

The Kunstverein moves into new exhibition premises next to the Kunsthalle. The 600m² building is the work of the Hamburg architect Paul Seitz (1911–1989). Municipal subsidies now enable the Kunstverein to pursue an independent artistic programme. Hans Platte, the Kunstverein's director from 1962 to 1971, focuses on popular, historical overviews of modern artists. By 1970 the number of members has increased to 4,500.

SINCE 1968 — ACTIVATION OF THE KUNSTVEREIN

Progressive members increasingly criticise the neglect of contemporary art in the Kunstverein's programme. It is Uwe M. Schneede (*1939), director of the Kunstverein from 1973 to 1984, who modernises the association's objectives. The focus is no longer solely on the aesthetics of art; it shifts increasingly to the interaction of art and society.

1973 — EXHIBITION »WALL PAINTING«

The exhibition of the painter Blinky Palermo (1948–1977) provokes a scandal. Many visitors are disconcerted by his radical reduction of visual means. Only later is Palermo's outstanding role as a concept artist understood and appreciated.

1974 — DIFFERENT FIELDS OF ACTIVITY

Regarding their respective exhibition programmes, the Kunstverein under Uwe M. Schneede, and the Kunsthalle, since 1969 headed by Werner Hofmann (1928–2013), establish separate exhibition profiles. The Kunstverein tends to exhibit young, experimental art, whereas the museum is primarily devoted to historical art.

1991/92 — RELOCATION AND DEMOLITION

The Kunstverein building next to the Kunsthalle is torn down to make place for a new wing of the Kunsthalle, the Galerie der Gegenwart (Gallery of Contemporary Art). Exhibitions are temporarily shown in the Deichtorhallen and on Fleetinsel. During the demolition works, Blinky Palermo's »Wall Painting« of 1973 is rediscovered and re-displayed. In 1997, Uwe M. Schneede, director of the Kunsthalle since 1991, commissions the permanent installation of Palermo's work in the Galerie der Gegenwart.

1993 — NEW BEGINNING AT KLOSTERWALL

In 1993 the Kunstverein moves into its current premises, a converted market hall at Klosterwall with an exhibition area of 1000 m².

The directors aim to support the latest artistic trends and offer multiple forms of interpretation in order to encourage discussion about current developments.

2017 — 200th ANNIVERSARY

The exhibition »The History Show« (28 January–2 April 2017), a cooperation between the Kunstverein and the Art History Department of the University of Hamburg, shows contemporary works dealing with socio-political issues from the Kunstverein's history. On the occasion of the Kunstverein's anniversary, the Kunsthalle stages the exhibition »Art is Public« (23 June–10 September 2017) which highlights historic episodes connecting the two institutions. The Kunstverein contributes a contemporary sound installation by the artist Hanne Lippard (*1984).