

Loa Haagen Pictet

Pictet & Cie SA, Curator of Collection Pictet

You became a curator for the Collection Pictet in Geneva in 2004. What did you find when you started working there?

Before 2004, when the Collection Pictet was founded, the bank had gathered several artworks of quality, primarily from the 19th century, but there was neither a proper collection strategy nor a responsible curator. Until then, artworks had been purchased to decorate offices around the world, mainly engravings and watercolours. In 2004 we decided to collect art on a long-term basis as a cultural patrimony with the focus on Swiss art from the founding year of the bank in 1805 up until the present day. Therefore, we made an assessment of what we had and kept all the most important pieces as part of our history and only years later gave access to collaborators to purchase minor works that they liked or engravings of which we had more than one sample or which simply did not meet our quality criteria.

How has the collection evolved during the last few of years?

Over the past ten years, we have tried to unite works by a selection of artists we consider to be of primary importance not only on a national level but on the international art scene as well. As a curator, I enjoy being able to work with both early 19th century paintings and purchasing important works by Caspar Wolf or by Alexandre Calame – and then, of course, the challenge is to build up a body of important works from the early 20th and mid century works, as well as contemporary art.

There are many highlights, starting with the neo-classical school by Jacques-Laurent Agasse, and Caspar Wolf, a pioneer of the history of mountain landscape painting. Chronologically, we move up with works by artists like Cuno Amiet, Félix Vallotton and Ferdinand Hodler. What I enjoy tremendously is including works by those who are less well-known internationally, but actually very well-known in their times and art historically important like Alice Bailly, and Adolf Wölfli. We have Hans Arp and all the members of the Giacometti family, Concrete Art with Max Bill and Richard Paul Lohse, Surrealism with Meret Oppenheim and Dieter Roth. Important living artists in the collection are Franz Gertsch, Markus Raetz, by whom we have a very large

corpus of work, John Armleder, and Ugo Rondinone. Valentin Carron is among the younger ones.

Pippilotti Rist is not one of them yet, because we have not found the right work of hers for our collection, but we certainly do wish to include her. We are always looking for the best works by the artists we consider of primary importance.

We collect Swiss Art, but the artists do not have to be in possession of a Swiss passport nor to live or be born in Switzerland. They can be passing through, marking the culture, having an impact on art history. This counts for both the ancient and the more recent artists.

How would you describe your challenges as a curator?

Increasing the quality of the collection, constantly looking for and finding the best works, as well as being alert and aware of what is going on with younger artists. We do not necessarily include young artists as they just come out of school. We try to let time work for us and let them prove that they have more than one good idea, to say it roughly.

The challenge is, of course, to keep the collection alive and to keep it an active part of the corporate everyday life. After more than ten years, we have a very solid interest from and connection to both the employees and clients through activities and events. Today our collection has become an integrated part of the corporate identity. My work is about basically keeping the collection alive within the company, and opening it up to new collaborations with museums. As member of IACCCA, the International Association of Corporate Collections of Contemporary Art, we also work on joint projects and common exhibition projects, as partners for museum shows.

Apart from that, a curator of a corporate fine art collection has to stimulate the board of directors to stay open and to pick up new challenges, to be open for what we are yet to discover, what the future may bring. For the moment our collection is in the bank premises all around the world. Maybe one day we can even have an individual place to show our works or to curate exhibitions.

How is the art collection shared with the employees?

There are works in all the publicly accessible reception areas, and also in some offices or workspaces, but not

yet everywhere – simply because the collection is rather young. We cannot keep up with the speed of the bank growth and the growing demand for art from all offices. But, employees all have access to the collection on our intranet, and we do training sessions for those who are interested, as well as regular visits focussing on one specific artist, new acquisitions, or different thematic topics. Every month, when new colleagues start in the bank, they also get an insight into the collection. In that way, they can choose to let art be part of their work lives as well.

How do you work with other institutions like museums?

We do our utmost to accord loans because it's a way to share our collection publicly. In 2013 we published a three-volume catalogue of our collection which has allowed museums to be more aware of what we actually have – this has also considerably increased the amount of loans we have given out. Additionally, as members of the IACCCA and the ICOM, The International Council of Museums, we value institutional collaborations.

Are these loans mostly museums within Switzerland?

The majority would be Swiss museums, like the Kunstmuseum in Basel and the Kunsthaus in Zurich, but we do also have quite a few loans elsewhere in Europe, mainly in Germany and France.

Do you have a regular budget for new acquisitions per year? How does that work?

We have an acquisition committee and we have a fixed annual budget. We do not communicate the exact amount, but the budget allows us to stay reactive on the art market and towards artists and galleries. When we do purchase one very important piece, then that same year we will not be able to make many other big acquisitions. Obviously, it also depends on the opportunities and the access to important works.

Do you sell works from the collection – apart from the duplicate prints that you mentioned earlier?

No, we don't. First of all Collection Pictet is a fairly young collection and we are quite happy for the moment with our purchases. We do not feel the urge

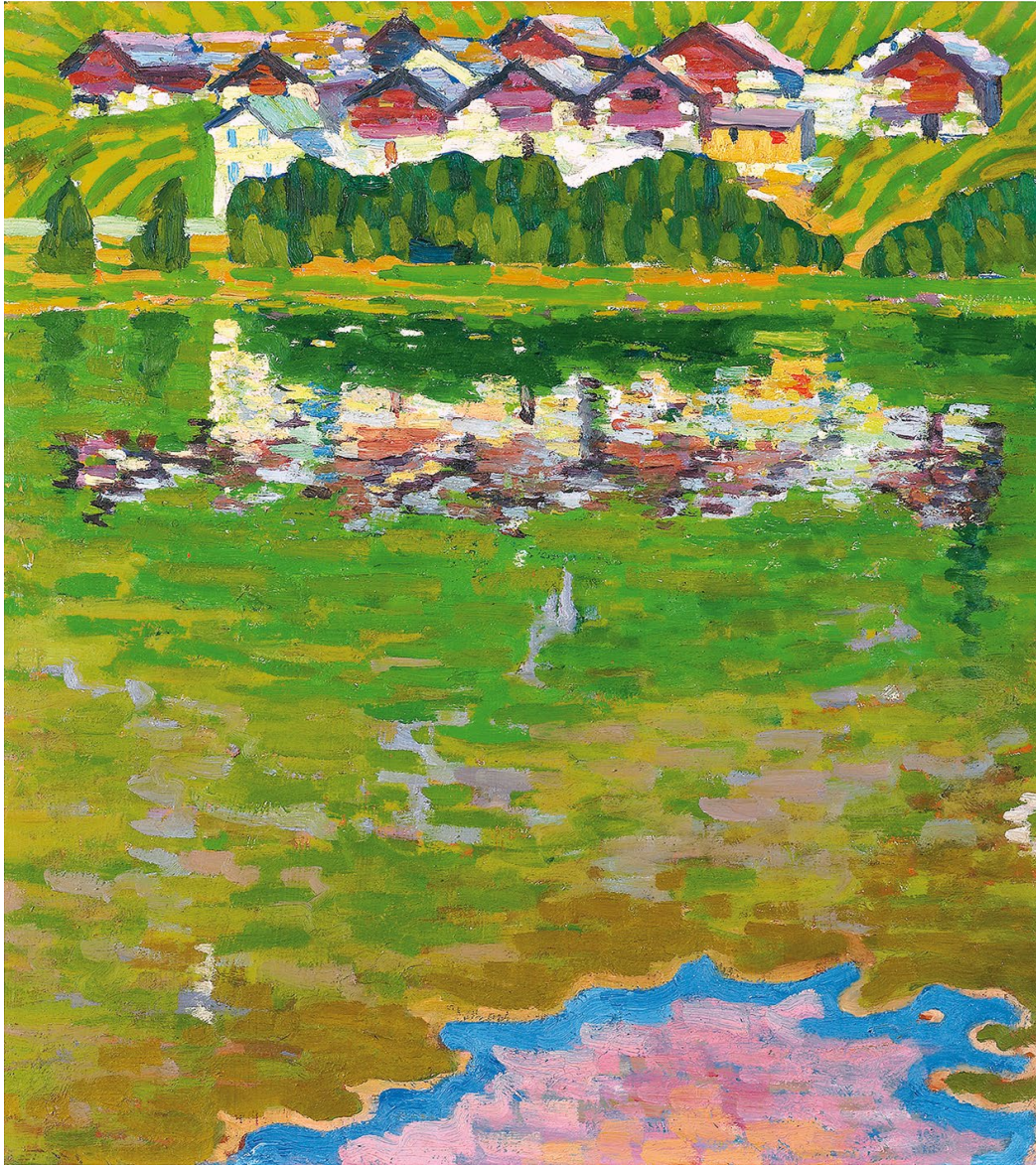
to sell anything – and if we one day would, it would only be minor works.

Our policy of not selling is massively important for us as a corporate art collection: towards artists, their families, and towards art dealers. We're known for not speculating, for not selling the works we purchased, and that gives us access to the important artworks. We really treasure that kind of collaboration. There is no speculative idea of art banking. That's simply not what we do.

How would you define good corporate citizenship?

I can only answer that from within the scope of the art collection. When you stress a certain ethic of behaviour you increase the confidence with all the people you work with.

There can be suspicion about companies collecting art. We regularly see that corporate art collections can be put on sale. In that respect, we have a really solid reputation as a bank that is now 210 years old. The collection for us is a cultural patrimony where we would like to try to tell the story of the bank. It's our evolution, which is told with the works on the wall. We decided to build up a cultural patrimony, as we believe that art is the best way of staying awake and alert to a society that is constantly changing. It can be stimulating for clients, but art may also bring massively important inspiration and a little bit of challenge for our colleagues. There are questions and answers to be found in art, in the various topics raised and the variety of emotions evoked.



Banque Pictet & Cie SA, Geneva, Switzerland

“Art presents an apparent contrast with our profession, since it reveals emotions more easily, while appealing to our esthetic senses and at the same time evoking our history and culture. It enriches and refreshes us as we deal with the demands of everyday life.”

Jacques de Saussure, Senior Partner of the Pictet Group

GIOVANNI GIACOMETTI
Capolago, sole, ca 1906-1907
Oil on Eternit
55 x 50 cm

Year of Foundation / 2004

Curator / Loa Haagen Pictet

Locations / The Collection is displayed in

16 offices of the Pictet Group worldwide

Size of the Collection / approx. 600

works, by approx. 165 artists

Key Artists / CASPAR WOLF, JACQUES-LAURENT AGASSE, ALEXANDRE CALAME, FERDINAND HODLER, FÉLIX VALLOTTON, CUNO AMIET, GIOVANNI GIACOMETTI, AUGUSTO GIACOMETTI, ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, ALICE BAILLY, MERET OPPENHEIM, JEAN ARP, MAX BILL, RICHARD PAUL LOHSE, JEAN TINGUELY, OLIVIER MOSSET, DIETER ROTH, ROMAN SIGNER, HELMUT FEDERLE, JOHN M ARMLEDER, MIRIAM CAHN, FISCHLI & WEISS, UGO RONDINONE, BEAT STREULI, THOMAS HUBER, SYLVIE FLEURY, URS FISCHER, PHILIPPE DECAUZAT, FRANCIS BAUDEVIN, SHIRANA SHAHBAZI

Focus / Swiss art from 1805 to present

Publications / Art Collection, Selection I, II and III (2013)

Although the new Headquarters of Banque Pictet in Geneva was not inaugurated until 2006, the conception of the new building two years earlier already provided the kick-start for a corporate art collection that would reflect the entire 200-year history of the bank, which specializes in wealth and asset management – while at the same time conveying the resolutely modern and future-orientated philosophy of the Pictet Group as a whole. This decision was clearly a reaction to the dawn of a new millennium – compounded by the fact that the construction of a new headquarters offered a time of reflection, a time to take stock of what had been and a time to formulate a vision of what might possibly lie ahead. The corporate art collection was thus conceived to reflect upon the bank's founding values, as well as to underscore the important role which art fulfils as a way of remaining alert to a changing world.

As a financial institution with firm roots in Switzerland, the bank logically opted to focus on Swiss art since 1805, the year the company was founded. The diction here is quite important, since the collection concept does not revolve around nationalist ideas of art in Switzerland, but rather attempts to visualize the broad range of artistic possibilities open to artists in the country, regardless of their own national heritage, as well as to Swiss artists living abroad. Such a concept makes it possible to delve into and share several – at times perhaps even disparate – views of Swiss culture, rather than limiting oneself to a single, static viewpoint: a philosophy, which can also be applied to good business sense in the new, multifaceted and globalized world of the 21st century.

The Collection Pictet tells a fascinating story about art and society in Switzerland, which can be broken down into three distinct "chapters": an historical chapter focusing on 19th century art, a chapter dedicated to the innovations of the avant-garde in the 20th century, and, last but certainly not least, a third chapter dedi-

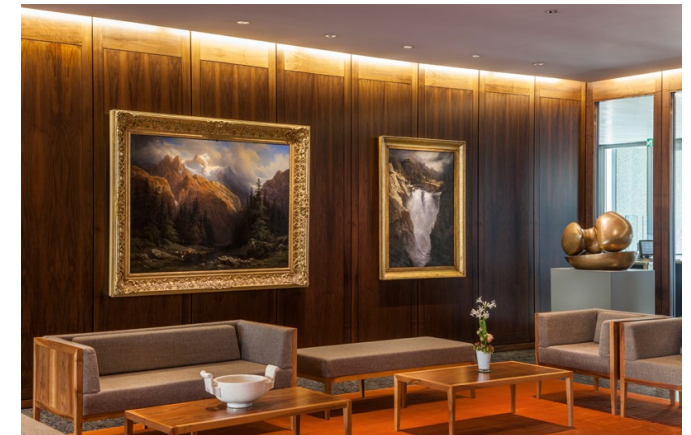
cated to the future and focusing on the new avant-garde which has emerged in the first years of the new millennium. Highlights from the collection of works from the 19th century include dramatically romantic landscape paintings by CASPAR WOLF, ALEXANDRE CALAME and FRANÇOIS DIDAY. These are complemented by genre scenes by the likes of JACQUES-LAURENT AGASSE, a large group of paper cut-outs by AGASSE, as well as by JEAN HUBER, GEORGES DU PAN and MICHEL LULLIN, caricatures by WOLFGANG-ADAM and RODOLPHE TÖPFFER, the latter of whom is credited with inventing the comic book, and, finally, exquisite pre-Modern paintings and works on paper by FERDINAND HODLER, ALEXANDRE PERRIER und FÉLIX VALLOTTON, an important liaison between Switzerland in the Parisian art scene in the late 19th century.

The Modernist tradition of the early 20th century is represented by a large group of works by CUNO AMIET, who was highly influenced by French Post-Impressionism, and by a group of paintings and woodcut engravings by GIOVANNI GIACOMETTI and his cousin AUGUSTO, as well as a sculpture by ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, the son of GIOVANNI. Swiss takes on Expressionism and New Objectivity are represented by HERMANN SCHERER and PAUL CAMENISCH respectively. These are complemented by the Art Brut works of ADOLF WÖLFLI and LOUIS SOUTTER. Abstract tendencies are found in seminal works by JEAN ARP, RICHARD PAUL LOHSE and MAX BILL. Uniquely individual tendencies within Swiss contemporary art are represented by the likes of DIETER ROTH, MARKUS RAETZ and FRANZ GERTSCH, while Minimalist-Conceptual tendencies can be discerned in the works of HELMUT FEDERLE, NIELE TORONI and RÉMY ZAUGG.

Perhaps most interesting, because of their inherently challenging nature, are the works of art that form the third and, for the time being, final chapter of Pictet's story of 200 years of Swiss art: the youngest



MERET OPPENHEIM
Grosser Himmel mit Wolken über Kontinenten, 1964
Oil on canvas
110 x 210 cm



FRANÇOIS DIDAY
Vue du Rosenluis, du Wellhorn et du Wetterhorn,
1844, oil on canvas

ALEXANDRE CALAME
Cascade de la Handeck, 1839, oil on canvas

JEAN ARP
Concrétion humaine sur coupe, 1948, bronze

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Loa Haagen Pictet,
Curator of the Collection Pictet

protagonists of avant-garde artistic production who have emerged in the first years of the 21st century. Because these artists are not only still alive, but also and especially act as seismographs of contemporary culture in general, Pictet has invited a number of younger artists to create works specifically for the collection and the space it inhabits.

Among the most fascinating site-specific commissions to date are JOHN M. ARMLEDER's "Liberty Dome" (2006), a wall-installation comprised of neat rows of 24 silver acrylic domes and 72 silver acrylic hemispheres, and BEAT STREULI's untitled installation of floor-to-ceiling color photographs (2009), which runs along 51 meters of corridor space. Further site-specific works by RENATE BUSER, THOMAS HUBER, SHIRANA SHAHBAZI, SILVIA BÄCHLI and CLAUDIO MOSER were also commissioned in recent years. In addition to these commissioned works, the bank is also proud of individual works acquired by important protagonists of the current Swiss art scene, such as ROMAN SIGNER, FISCHLI & WEISS, CHRISTIAN MARCLAY, UGO RONDINONE, THOMAS HIRSCHHORN and SYLVIE FLEURY.

Fully aware of the power of modern and contemporary art as a source of inspiration, a trigger of reflection and a test of limits, Pictet offers in many cases highly challenging examples of art and creativity an important place in the everyday life of both its employees and its clients. "Art presents an apparent contrast with our profession," Jacques de Saussure, Senior Partner of the Pictet Group, explains, "since it reveals emotions, while appealing to our esthetic senses and, at the same time, evoking our history and culture. It enriches and refreshes us as we deal with the demands of everyday life." The collection is thus not only on view

at the bank's Headquarters in Geneva, but also in 15 additional offices of the Pictet Group worldwide. The collection, which now features 600 works by 165 artists, is the result of a collective effort between three managing partners of the bank and Loa Haagen Pictet, chief curator and art advisor, who heads a small team of art historians.

In addition to the collection itself, the bank is also responsible for the "Prix Pictet", an important photography award inaugurated in 2008 to promote and increase awareness of crucial topics of sustainability. The award aims to put a spotlight on outstanding photography created to confront the most pressing social and environmental challenges of today. In addition, an endowment of CHF 100,000 for the main prize, a second grant is awarded to a photographer to undertake a field trip to a region where Pictet currently supports a sustainability project, thus underscoring the importance of contemporary artistic production far beyond the art market.



JOHN M ARMLEDER
Liberty Dome CP, XI – Liberty Dome LD, XII, 2006
24 silver acrylic domes – 72 silver acrylic hemispheres