

The Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation and the Schaulager

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Part E introduced the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation as an example of how a family can hold art in a charitable structure.¹ Its cultural significance reaches further. Emanuel Hoffmann, a son of Fritz Hoffmann-La Roche, the founder of Roche, and his wife Maja Hoffmann-Stehlin collected the art of their own time. After Emanuel Hoffmann died in a car accident in 1932, his widow established the foundation in 1933 with the purpose of acquiring works of artists whose significance was not yet generally recognised and making them accessible to the public.²

The foundation deposited its works with the public collection from the outset, which allowed the museum to show contemporary art that it could not have bought with its own budget. In 1934 Maja Hoffmann married the conductor Paul Sacher, and under the name Maja Sacher-Stehlin she remained the central figure of the foundation until her death in 1989.³ The foundation acquired works by artists such as Joseph Beuys, Robert Gober, Katharina Fritsch, Jeff Wall and Bruce Nauman, often in depth and long before they reached the prices of the market.⁴

By the end of the twentieth century the collection had outgrown the space available in the museum. The foundation, under the presidency of Maja Oeri, responded with an unusual solution. The Schaulager, opened in 2003 in Münchenstein in the canton of Basel-Landschaft and designed by Herzog & de Meuron, combines functions that are usually separated. It keeps the works permanently installed under conditions suitable for conservation, makes them accessible to researchers and professionals throughout the year and opens to the general public for major exhibitions.⁵ Part H described its location on the Dreispitz, the former free warehouse area at the border of the two cantons.⁶

The Schaulager illustrates a form of patronage that combines private ownership, a public purpose and a professional infrastructure. Its concept

has influenced debates on museum storage far beyond Basel, because most museums show only a small fraction of their holdings. For a family, the model offers a way to keep a collection together and to give it a public function without surrendering control to a state institution. For the city, it adds an institution of international standing whose building, located in the neighbouring canton, also shows that the cultural space of Basel does not end at the cantonal border.

1 Notes

1. On the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation as an instrument of wealth planning, see Part E, Chapter V. To be verified. ↩
2. On the deed of the Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung of 1933, its purpose of collecting contemporary art "using new means of expression not yet universally understood", and its deposit of works with the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, see the publications of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation. Wording to be verified. ↩
3. On Maja Sacher-Stehlin (1896–1989), her marriage to Paul Sacher in 1934 and her role in the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation and the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, see the Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz, article "Sacher-Stehlin, Maja". Dates to be verified. ↩
4. On the collection of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, including extensive holdings of works by Joseph Beuys, Robert Gober, Katharina Fritsch, Jeff Wall and Bruce Nauman, see the collection catalogues of the foundation and the Schaulager. Names to be verified. ↩
5. On the concept of the Schaulager (opened 2003, Münchenstein, Herzog & de Meuron), operated by the Laurenz Foundation, as a combination of storage, research and exhibition, see the publications of the Schaulager. To be verified. ↩
6. On the Dreispitz and the Schaulager, see Part H, Chapter V. To be verified. ↩

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