PICASSO
KLEE MATISSE
GIACOMETTI

THE EYE OF COLLECTOR-DEALER
HEINZ BERGGRUEN

1 Heinz Berggruen, January 1988, photograph by Helmut Newton. Helmut Newton Foundation

This book has been published to accompany the exhibition *Heinz Berggruen, a Dealer and His Collection: Picasso – Klee – Matisse – Giacometti. Masterpieces from Museum Berggruen / Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin*, held at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, October 2, 2024–January 27, 2025.

The exhibition is organized by the Établissement Public du Musée d'Orsay et du Musée de l'Orangerie – Valéry-Giscard-d'Estaing, Paris, with the curatorial collaboration of and exceptional loans from Museum Berggruen / Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin.

MUSEUM BERGGRUEN | Musée de l'Orangerie

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Catalog numbers (cat.) refer to works included in the exhibition.
Figure numbers (fig.) refer to works reproduced here for illustrative purposes.

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Editorial Direction by Claire Bernardi and Gabriel Montua

MASTERPIECES FROM MUSEUM BERGGRUEN / NEUE NATIONALGALERIE BERLIN

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Foreword by Claire Bernardi

When Heinz Berggruen published his autobiography, a decade or so before he died, he titled it *Highway and Byways.* With a touch of self-mockery, however, he had the French translation appear as *J'étais mon meilleur client* (I was my best customer). This exhibition explores not just the extraordinary collection this unique art dealer left to posterity but also his relationship to "his" artists and the postwar art world in Paris. The show thereby deepens a recent theme in exhibition programming at the Musée de l'Orangerie, one that foregrounds the major players in the twentieth-century art market.

Indeed, the vast set of works that Berggruen sold to the German government in 2000 notably echoes the Walter-Guillaume collection in the Orangerie itself. Like his predecessor Paul Guillaume, Berggruen was a major art dealer who was also active on the French and international cultural scene for decades, even as he assembled a very extensive private collection. Over the years he acquired dozens—and later hundreds—of drawings and paintings by Picasso, Klee, Cézanne, and Matisse. Berggruen's path was hardly predictable. Born into a Jewish family in Berlin in 1914, he was forced to leave the country in 1936 with just ten marks to his name. He first emigrated to the United States. Then, once the war was over, he moved to Paris, where he opened a small gallery. In a matter of years, it became one of the leading venues in Europe. At that point the art dealer began building up his own collection, later donating many key works to major international museums, and finally his home town of Berlin asking him to open a museum devoted to the core of his collection.

We are now pleased to be showing a large part of this extremely high-quality collection at the Musée de l'Orangerie, thanks to a rare collaboration with Museum Berggruen / Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin. The full extent of the collection can finally be seen in France—the Musée Picasso in Paris had shown Berggruen's Picassos in 2006—thanks to these generous loans. Museumgoers will thus be able to view roughly one hundred masterpieces (including drawings, paintings, and sculptures) that characterized Berggruen's taste; indeed, he focused on just a few very great twentieth-century artists. Alongside major works by Picasso, the show will feature Klee's poetic drawings, those abstract realms he explored between 1917 and 1931 when teaching in Germany, first at the Bauhaus and then in Düsseldorf. There are also several slender figures sculpted by Alberto Giacometti, which Berggruen wanted to place at the center of his museum. While the exhibition and its accompanying catalog showcase these key twentieth-century artists, they also underscore Berggruen's role as dealer and collector, exploring his links to the art world and the network he put together.

Deep gratitude is owed to the curators at both Museum Berggruen and the Musée de l'Orangerie, thanks to whom the French public can rediscover a fateful figure who symbolizes the close cultural ties between our two countries. We are equally grateful to the contributors to this catalog for the new light they have shed on this leading player on the postwar art scene.

As already mentioned, this project would not have come to fruition without the generosity of our German partners: Museum Berggruen / Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Finally, our sincerest thanks go to the entire Berggruen family, especially Olivier and Nicolas Berggruen, for their unfailing support, their encouragement, and the works they have lent. And today we'd like to offer a special tribute to their mother, Bettina Berggruen, who died on November 21, 2023.

2 **Heinz Berggruen during his time as a sergeant in the American army, 1943**

3 **Heinz Berggruen, San Francisco, 1937**

4 **Heinz Berggruen as a child with his father, Ludwig Berggruen, 1916**

5 Title page of a Berggruen & Cie gallery catalog

A FEW RECOLLECTIONS OF THE BERGGRUEN GALLERY

OLIVIER BERGGRUEN

6 **Matisse exhibition at the Berggruen gallery**

My father, Heinz Berggruen, had countless artistic and literary adventures during his long life—his career as a gallery owner represented a crucial phase in a path full of unexpected twists and turns. He was a permanent exile straddling several worlds, cultivating in spite of himself a certain cosmopolitanism far removed from the conventional background of his childhood. His journey—first from Berlin to Grenoble and Toulouse, then from San Francisco to Munich and Paris (with frequent trips to the Riviera), and finally from New York in the 1980s to Geneva and, ultimately, Berlin—indicates a prolonged rootlessness. But this nomadic existence wasn't an unhappy one. On the contrary, he adopted the nickname "Heinz-im-Glück" (Lucky Heinz), and enthusiastically adapted to changes of address and country, even if the majority of his career took place in France. Although the solitude of his childhood gave way to success and fame, a certain part of him still shunned worldliness and the hectic pace of everyday life. Art remained his favored way of glimpsing other worlds, those parallel lives suggested by the dreamlike quality of Paul Klee's watercolors. It is no coincidence that his German autobiography bears the same title as one of Klee's paintings, *Hauptweg und Nebenwege* (*Highway and Byways*), illustrating the variety of lives my father embarked upon.

After his childhood in Berlin, followed by the study of literature in Toulouse and Grenoble, he spent the war years as a journalist in San Francisco, returning to Germany in 1945, where he edited the liberal newspaper *Heute.* In 1947, having directly witnessed the ravages of the Nazi era, he decided to move to Paris. Appointed arts commissioner at UNESCO, he had to deal with a bureaucracy that seemed too burdensome to him. Changing direction once again, he opened his first art gallery at Place Dauphine on the Île de la Cité in Paris, but soon gave the tiny premises up to his neighbors, Simone Signoret and Yves Montand, who wanted to turn the place into their kitchen. Postwar Paris was enjoying an artistic revival, so there were many opportunities for a young dealer like my father. In 1950, he moved the gallery to 70 Rue de l'Université, where it remained for the next four decades. At first, he focused on buying and selling illustrated Dada and surrealist books, prints, and drawings, but, as his business took off, this expanded to include paintings and sculptures. He also published artists' books and organized exhibitions devoted to Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Gino Severini, Henri Matisse, Max Ernst, Antoni Tàpies, and many others. By the late 1940s, he had already met some of the people who would prove crucial to the future of his gallery, notably writers Paul Éluard, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Michel Tapié de Céleyran, and, above all, the legendary Dada poet Tristan Tzara. It was Tzara who introduced my father to Picasso—a decisive encounter that ultimately led to a series of publications and joint projects.

Heinz exhibited Picasso's works over the years, selling many of his prints and drawings. His contact with the Spanish artist led to a fruitful partnership that resulted in the publication of limited-edition books. One image in particular epitomizes my father's career path: a photo shows him crouching next to Picasso (fig. 55) while the floor of the Cannes studio is strewn with proofs of *Diurnes* (Diurnals): a book created in collaboration with a young photographer, André Villers, featuring texts by Jacques Prévert. Picasso had cut out cardboard figures of playful fauns and farm animals—creatures that come alive in daylight (hence the title of the book). My father published this album in 1962. Other publications and projects sprang from this friendship, notably original lithographs for the covers of the gallery's catalogs, as well as for an illustrated book titled *40 dessins en marge du Buffon* (Forty drawings in the margins of Buffon['s *Natural History*], 1957). Picasso also authorized my father to make new casts of the provocatively cubist *Head of a Woman (Fernande)* (cat. 63), which met with unexpected success thanks to the efforts of art dealer Ambroise Vollard; furthermore, Picasso allowed my father to commercialize nearly one third of his annual output of prints.

Heinz's artistic vision was in the tradition of the dealer-collectors of the early twentieth century, such as Wilhelm Uhde and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who promoted the cubism of Georges Braque and Picasso as well as, more generally, European modernism. It was nevertheless the English art critic and collector Douglas Cooper who had the most lasting influence on my father's career. Cooper had assembled a collection of modern art in his youth, which he later displayed in the Château de Castille, his home in southern France. Shunning safe investments in the School of Paris—Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard, Georges Rouault, and Nice-period Matisse—Cooper favored what he called "true cubist art" as practiced by Braque, Picasso, Fernand Léger, and Juan Gris. He felt it was the alpha and omega of twentieth-century art, the emergence of a brilliant, tragic generation at the crossroads of an old, outmoded world and the upheavals of a new century. Cooper's vision was moderately avant-gardist: he stressed the continuity of impressionism and post-impressionism, defending the tradition of European painting as laid down by Roger Fry (the guardian spirit of a certain formalism that was fashionable among artistic circles of the day) and adopted by other English aesthetes. My father was profoundly influenced by Cooper's taste and managed to convince the Englishman to sell him a few works by Klee and Picasso.

Meanwhile, in the 1950s, Heinz made some key acquisitions, including paintings and watercolors by Paul Cézanne, as well as works by Miró, Bonnard, a Marc Chagall from the Vitebsk period, a small, dreamy canvas by Max Ernst, bronzes by Alberto Giacometti, and a few items of African and Oceanic art—as well as, of course, works by Klee, which he continued to buy hand over fist.

In the late 1950s, he met Bettina Moissi, which proved to be pivotal. She was the daughter of actor Alexander Moissi, who first performed, among other roles, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Everyman*. Heinz and Bettina were married on June 3, 1961, and in the early 1960s had two sons: my brother Nicolas and me. (John and Helen are the children of my father's previous marriage in San Francisco.)

Although we were kept away from our father's business—an art gallery is no playground for children, he would say to us—many of the finest works in his collection would hang in the house, whether in Paris or Saint-Denis-le-Ferment in Normandy. In particular, I recall Picasso's *Still Life on a Piano* (cat. 65), a *Contrast of Forms* (1913) by Léger, Picasso's magnificent *Harlequin with a Mirror* (1923, now in the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid), watercolors by Klee,

and several African objects. When I finally went to the gallery, for a Kandinsky exhibition, I was struck by the simplicity of the exhibition rooms, painted in white, yet adorned with an imposing white plaster chandelier by Alberto Giacometti (fig. 6 and cat. 122) hanging in the relatively modest—at least by today's standards—main gallery. Four decades later, my father donated the chandelier to the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, but he kept a gilt-bronze cast of it in his mountain retreat in Switzerland. To me, this chandelier is like a thread running through my father's life from Paris to Berlin, up to his final days in Germany and Switzerland.

Heinz devoted much of his business to publishing and disseminating prints and lithographs. These were listed in annual catalogs titled *Maîtres-graveurs contemporains* (Contemporary master printmakers), each one bearing a special cover printed by Daniel Jacomet or the Union printworks. My father's chosen artists included Zao Wou-Ki, Roberto Matta, Joan Miró, and Pierre Alechinsky. The format of these booklets (*plaquettes*) was designed to make them easy to slip into a jacket pocket, without the illustrations having to be made too small. Often solo shows were accompanied by original lithographs, as was the case for Miró, Dubuffet, Marini, Matisse, and Picasso.

The gallery found room for many artists, some of whom were not part of the modernist movement of the day. I'm thinking of the Japanese printmaker Yozo Hamaguchi and his wife Keiko Minami, whose dreamlike works, often small in size, reflected a Japanese sensibility that combined naivety with realism; the work of CoBrA artists Karel Appel and Pierre Alechinsky; printmakers Rudolf Mumprecht, Pierre Courtin, and Paul Wunderlich; paintings by Dora Maar, Picasso's tragic muse during the war, who never recovered from their breakup; and Bona Tibertelli de Pisis, wife of writer André Pieyre de Mandiargues (a member of the surrealist group and a friend of my parents). Here, I would like to briefly discuss the work of these women artists, who were, it must be said, too rarely included in my father's exhibition schedule (except for Leonor Fini and Keiko Minami, both of whom belonged to the surrealist trend).

Dora Maar's landscapes

The name of Dora Maar (1907–1997) is famously and inextricably linked to Picasso in the years 1936–1944. She became the emblematic image of the ravages of the Spanish civil war and the tragic years that followed: John Richardson wrote that Picasso "used [Dora's] tears to stand for mankind's."[1] When her affair with Picasso ended toward the end of the war, she suffered a deep depression for which electroshock therapy—an experimental treatment at the time—administered by Jacques Lacan brought only temporary relief. The few friends she saw during that period were Nicolas de Staël, the American writer James Lord, and my father. Picasso offered her a house at Ménerbe, in the South of France. Maar completely cut herself off from the outside world, and no longer replied to requests to show her photographs. At Ménerbe, she began to paint landscapes in a representational manner that diverged from the postwar spirit marked by lyrical abstraction. And in 1957 Heinz convinced her to show these new paintings (fig. 10).

Maar nevertheless remained aloof. She didn't attend the opening of her show, probably to avoid running into former friends—witnesses to her repressed memories. The catalog text was written in the form of a letter to Dora from Douglas Cooper, a loyal friend of Picasso and his circle. After citing Turner's near-abstract landscapes, executed in oil with a palette knife, Cooper pointed out the sense of calm and plenitude exuded by Maar's paintings. The serenity of her vision was however attenuated by the feeling of movement and thrust imparted by thick impasto applied with a knife. Although the show was a success, Maar appeared less and less often in public, spending the subsequent decades withdrawn from the world. Many years later, in 1997, my father was one of the few friends to see her shortly before she died.

Bona's paintings

Born in Rome in 1926, Bona Tibertelli de Pisis—later known simply as "Bona"—spent her childhood in Modena, northern Italy. When she first started painting as a very young woman, she was influenced by the Italian metaphysical school as well as by the work of her uncle, the artist Filippo de Pisis. After her father died, Bona joined her uncle—a charismatic, well-known figure—in Venice, where she continued her studies at the Accademia di Belle Arti. In 1947, she moved to Paris, mixing in surrealist circles. A few years later, she married André Pieyre de Mandiargues, marking the start of a collaboration based on literary and artistic exchanges. That was when my father met her, probably along with her husband, who occasionally wrote texts for the gallery's exhibitions.

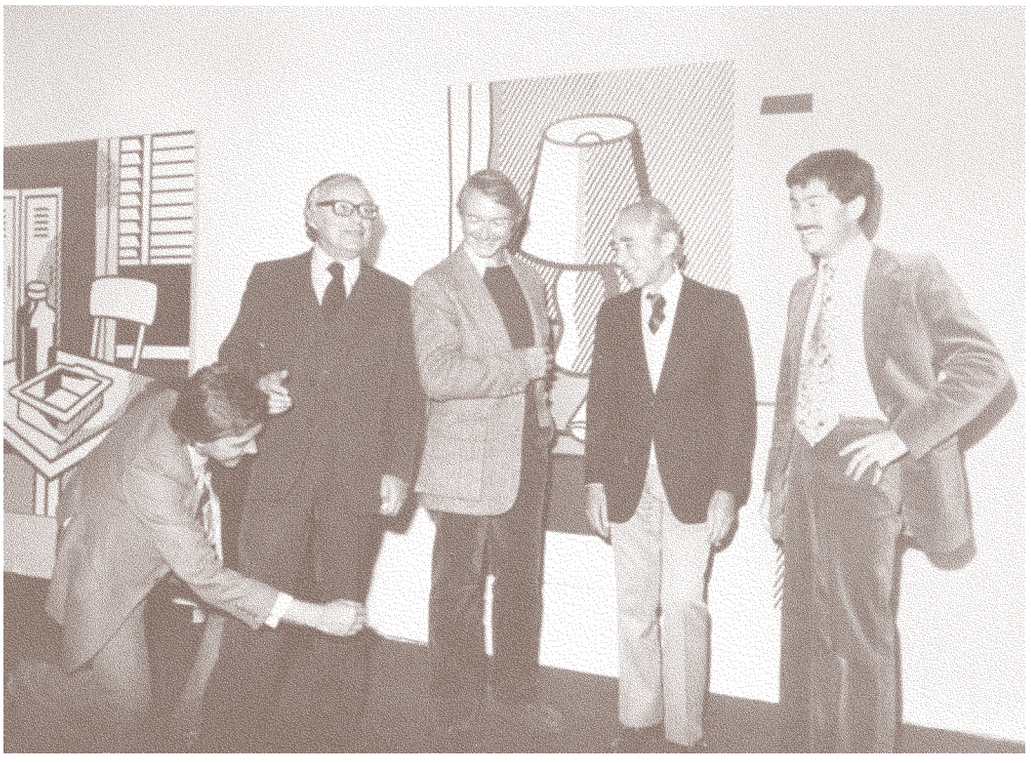
At that time, Bona was making small paintings whose recurring subjects were imaginary, metaphysical landscapes comprised of strange plants and freakish creatures. Her work explored surrealistic themes centered on the idea of metamorphosis, in which human beings, plants, and animals appeared in fluid, fantastical incarnations, like a memorable passage from Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*: "It is a man or a stone or a tree about to begin the fourth canto."[2] Bona's work is characterized by a world of ambivalent, hermaphroditic creatures, emblematically represented by the snail: androgynous, in permanent mutation, ostensibly fragile yet resilient. By way of example, a painting from the early 1950s depicts a girl (Alice in Wonderland?) plunged into an oneiric world through which she seems to move hesitantly, innocently even. These youthful works were exhibited in 1952 by my father in his gallery at 70 Rue de l'Université; the invitation to the opening on March 19 featured a facsimile of Bona's handwriting.

In an enlightening text on her work written for the exhibition booklet, Francis Ponge poetically referred to "a pure-eyed bath [that] retains its virtue, while the long-pampered objects it tosses up—roots, stones, stumps, shells, and ancient amphorae decorated with sandworms, which all constitute a newly authentic, primitive setting through which we stroll, stripped of clothing by the storm—are presented to us clearly, washed by the same liquid, actively dreamed mind."[3] In the mid-1950s (after Filippo de Pisis had died), Bona

1 John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 4, *The Minotaur Years* (New York: Random House, 2022), p. 246.
2 Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror* [1869], trans. Guy Wernhem (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 163.
3 Francis Ponge, *Bona: Peintures* (Paris: Berggruen & Cie, 1952), n.p.

7 Efrossina Klee, Heinz Berggruen, Irene Bayer, and Alexander (Aljoscha) Klee at Irschenhausen in the Isar Valley, July 28, 1946

8 Heinz Berggruen with Pablo Picasso, Cannes, early 1950s



9 Heinz Berggruen, Roy Lichtenstein, Leo Castelli, and Jan-Eric Löwenadler, FIAC, Grand Palais, Paris, 1976

experimented with new techniques: folding, incorporating disparate elements, shattering forms, creating surprising juxtapositions of fabrics stitched onto canvas, employing collage techniques with garments and scraps of cloth. A totemic animism continued to inhabit her imagination. Later in life, Bona turned to writing. In 1967, she published her autobiography (a collaboration with Alain Vircondelet), titled *Bonaventure*; she also had a hand in works by other writers including Octavio Paz, Giuseppe Ungaretti, and Italo Calvino, and she translated her husband's work into Italian. Bona died in Paris in 2000.

There has been a recent renewal of interest in this generation of women artists. Maar has benefited from numerous solo shows and monographs, while Bona's work was shown in 2024 at the Museo Nivola in Sardinia and the Venice Biennale. Beyond the label of "surrealist muses," Maar and Bona each produced a significant corpus of work, even if it had been difficult for them to break free from a male environment: Maar's photography gave way to more conventional paintings, demonstrating her determination to stand out from the expectations of the surrealist group; Bona's vision remained unique, uncategorizable, and untamed.

That there was a certain amount of misogyny at the very root of the surrealist movement is incontrovertible. The movement's various "faces"—Leonor Fini, Lee Miller, Ady Fidelin, Nusch Éluard, Leonora Carrington, Meret Oppenheim—were objectified by the well-meaning and often impassioned gaze of their admirers. Nadja, in André Breton's novel of that name, is a plaything of the narrator's fantasies; she is defined and formed by his view of her. Once the sexual act has been performed, the surrealist muse descends into madness (even if Breton *does* challenge the psychiatric institutions that fail to cure her). Although the surrealists transformed our view of a world that had just recovered from the ravages of World War I and still considered mechanized bodies to be machines of desire, their relationship to women remained traditional—the same patriarchal structures and systems persisted, as Maar painfully experienced in her affair with Picasso. A photographer every bit as gifted as her male counterparts, she was unable to pursue her work after the war, the after-effects of separation being too hard to bear. Perhaps encroaching on her ex-lover's territory, she thus moved into a field that came as a surprise to her contemporaries: representational painting that was a world away from her early surrealism. Bona, meanwhile, worked as a free woman, claiming her own poetic and visual realm, lightly striding the entire world.

I hope that these few reflections will demonstrate that my father's gallery encouraged a diversity of voices and trends, even if it is best known for its modernist sensibility.

10 Cover of the Berggruen & Cie gallery catalog *Dora Maar: Paysages*, 1952

11, 12 **The Berggruen gallery, 1971**

Heinz Berggruen's life and career were anything but predictable. Born into a Jewish family in Berlin in 1914, he emigrated to the United States in 1936, with just ten German marks to his name. He initially studied literature and then was introduced to the world of art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; after World War II, he returned to Europe and opened his first art gallery, in Paris, in 1947.

Both a passionate collector and dealer, Berggruen was guided by his own personal tastes and an unfailing loyalty to his favorite artists, gradually assembling an extraordinary private collection of twentieth-century art. This collection, which has constituted the Museum Berggruen / Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin since 1996, includes more than a hundred masterpieces by Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, and Alberto Giacometti. Paying tribute to Berggruen's discerning eye, this volume provides a new understanding of the collector-dealer's artistic tastes.

MASTERPIECES FROM MUSEUM BERGGRUEN / NEUE NATIONALGALERIE BERLIN

ISBN: 978-2-08-046244-2

54500

US $45 / CAN. $60 /
£35 / €39

Printed in Spain by Indice
editions.flammarion.com
@flammarioninternational

9 782080 462442