

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Swiss Art Archives in Zurich unseal their treasures

A love letter from Ferdinand Hodler to his model or Winston Churchill's handwritten order for canvas and paints – the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) in Zurich holds over 19,000 directories on art in Switzerland and more than 200 fonds relating to well-known artists. When the Swiss Art Archives open on 13 September 2012, SIK-ISEA hopes these precious originals will be more widely recognised and more easily accessible, aided by regular talks, guided tours and innovative formats for presenting the archive holdings via touchscreen and online.

The Swiss Art Archives run by SIK-ISEA are a specialist resource open to the public, with a unique collection of letters, photographs, sketchbooks, diaries, working files, exhibition records and press clippings on Swiss art from the 19th to the 21st century. There are two sections: the Documentation Collection and the Fonds Collection.

Records on 19,000 artists

The Document Collection holds material on over 19,000 artists and institutions of relevance to Switzerland. Items include newspaper articles, invitations to exhibitions, opening speeches, sales lists, press releases, biographical data and bibliographies. The Swiss Art Archives keep records on the activities of all Swiss artists who exhibit regularly and are listed in the online artists' lexicon SIKART published by SIK-ISEA.

200 artists' fonds

The Fonds Collection contains more than 200 sets of personal papers relating to Swiss artists whose work can be found in museums of international standing or whose artistic position in the art sector is a consistent subject of research. The core consists of letters, diaries, sketchbooks, documentary photos and working files.

A long-established collection

The Swiss Art Archives have their roots in the foundation of SIK-ISEA in 1951. The Institute soon began keeping documents on art in Switzerland and has steadily built the collection, reflecting its own history of research and documentation. Thanks to major donations in the early decades, the Fonds Collection partially acquired the personal papers of Ernst Stückelberg, Rudolf Koller and Augusto Giacometti. The Document Collection expanded in the 1970s, with a focus on press cuttings and exhibition files. It also merged with the archives of the Swiss Artists' Lexicon (1918–1967). By 2000 the Archives had obtained papers from Otto Meyer-Amden, Reinhold Kündig, Max von Moos, Hans Fischli and Fritz Pauli.

Key donations

In the 21st century, the Archives have benefited from some valuable bequests: the papers of Aldo Walker, the letters of Karl Geiser, the family correspondence of Giovanni Giacometti, and letters and sketches by Otto Meyer-Amden from the family estate. Recent acquisitions include Carl Albert Loosli's Hodler archives, on permanent loan from the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Neuchâtel.

Here to help your research

The Swiss Art Archives list these holdings on the online artists' lexicon SIKART and post documents and finding aids on the Web. The principal task of the Archives is to advise academics, curators, journalists and collectors on how to track down records, use resources and conduct searches in other archives.



SIK ISEA

Online and on site

The Swiss Art Archives make their collections available through online presentations of major bequests (virtual showcases), regular input of digitalised archives to SIKART, lectures and guided tours. To complement the existing holdings, the Archives conduct interviews with young Swiss artists, which are published on the Web. The Swiss Art Archives are open free of charge to anyone wishing to perform research and are committed to assisting users as efficiently as possible.

Open to all

Once visitors have registered, the items they have ordered are available for consultation at desks on the premises. Visitors can access the Internet free of charge. They are free to photograph documents themselves, as long as there are no copyright or data protection restraints. Professional reproductions can be ordered from the Archives. Items are also available on loan for use in exhibitions.

Contact

SIK-ISEA, Swiss Art Archives, Zollikerstrasse 32, CH-8032 Zurich

www.schweizerischeskunstarchiv.ch, kunstarchiv@sik-isea.ch, T +41 44 388 51 04

Monday to Friday: 1.30–5.30 pm by prior arrangement

If you would like more details or a personal briefing, SIK-ISEA's Managing Director Dr Roger Fayet (roger.fayet@sik-isea.ch, T: 41 44 388 51 51) and the Head of the *Swiss Art Archives* Michael Schmid (michael.schmid@sik-isea.ch, T: +41 44 388 51 06) will be happy to assist you. For press kits and photographs, please contact our Head of Communications Sandra Ruff (sandra.ruff@sik-isea.ch, T: +41 44 388 51 36).