

Peggy Guggenheim COLLECTION

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Press release

CANTON ARGOVIA AND THE PEGGY GUGGENHEIM COLLECTION HONOR THE MEMORY OF PEGGY GUGGENHEIM WITH EXCHANGE OF GIFTS

In recognition of the ancestral origins of the distinguished Guggenheim family, who emigrated from Lengnau, Argovie in the early 19th Century, the Canton Argovie has acquired in a joint project with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, two prints of an historic photograph of Peggy Guggenheim (1898-1979) by the renowned Hungarian photographer André Kertész. One of these is intended for the Kunstmuseum of Argovie, while the other is to be donated to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. A ceremony, to celebrate this collaborative venture of goodwill between Canton Argovie and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation will be held on **Wednesday April 3**, at Schloss Lenzburg, in the presence of Mr. Rainer Huber, Secretary of State for Culture, Karole Vail, granddaughter of Peggy Guggenheim, and Philip Rylands, Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

Rainer Huber commented: "This felicitous and symbolic occasion, marked by the very tangible acquisition of an important work of photographic art, is a reminder to the world of the origins in Switzerland of a very remarkable dynasty of Guggenheims, whose industrial exploits first and philanthropy after, ranging from scientific research, medicine, humane studies for peace, as well as the patronage and collecting of the arts, represents one of the outstanding episodes in modern American history."

Thomas Krens, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, remarked: "One of the missions of the Guggenheim Foundation is to collect major works of modern visual art, and when this also happens to be a photo-portrait of Peggy Guggenheim by a major exponent of avant-garde photography, there is all the more cause for congratulation and gratitude to the Canton Argovie that has made this possible."

In the 17th Century the Guggenheims were one of the leading families in the Jewish ghetto of Lengnau. Born in Lengnau in 1792, Simon Guggenheim emigrated to the United States in 1847 in search of his fortune, taking with him his nineteen-year old son Meyer. The 1881 purchase of two mines near Leadville, Colorado, precipitated the rapid growth of the business managed by Meyer and his seven sons, and of one of the greatest fortunes in American industrial history, from the mining and smelting of lead, silver and above all copper. Solomon Guggenheim, one of Meyer's sons, founded the now-legendary Guggenheim museum built by Frank Lloyd Wright on Fifth Avenue, New York.

Peggy Guggenheim, daughter of Benjamin Guggenheim, the second youngest of Meyer's sons, assembled the majority of her collection between 1938 and 1947 while living in Europe and New York. In 1947 she returned to Europe and exhibited her collection for the first time at the 1948 Venice Biennale. Shortly afterwards she acquired Palazzo Venier dei Leoni in Venice, where she was to live for 30 years and where her collection is today exhibited.

In 1945 Peggy Guggenheim was photographed by André Kertész in her apartment on East 61st Street, New York, some months after her separation from Max Ernst, her second husband. She sits on a rocker chair by architect Frederick Kiesler, and in the background hangs Paul Delvaux's *L'Aurore*

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(The Break of Day), July 1937, acquired a few years earlier in London. The shadow on the wall beside the convex mirror is cast by an encrusted bottle made by Laurence Vail, Peggy's first husband. Peggy's collection of earrings, including those made by artists such as Tanguy and Calder, is visible on the wall nearby. The photograph, with its Surrealist components, its references to Peggy's private life, and the presence of works of art still today exhibited in her former home, is a masterly synthesis of allusive portraiture, and a work of art in its own right.

Born in Budapest in 1894, André Kertész bought his first box camera at the age of seventeen. In 1925 he moved to Paris, where he frequented avant-garde artists such as Brancusi, Man Ray, Chagall, Calder, and Mondrian, as well as the Surrealists, many of whom attended his first exhibition in 1927. Kertész experimented with optical distortions to give his images of the world around him strange new effects. In 1933 he created a series of nudes photographed in fairground mirrors called 'Distortions', after which he mitigated the Surrealist component of his work in favor of realism. In the 1930s he was at the height of his success: his photographs appeared in German, French and English journals, were exhibited in Essen and Belgium, and his first two books, *Enfants* (1933) and *Paris vu par André Kertész* were published. In order to work for a news agency he moved to New York in 1937, where he was to spend the rest of his life until his death in 1985. In 1975 he was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation grant.

Kertész's portrait will be displayed in the Venetian museum as a permanent reminder of the Swiss origins of Peggy Guggenheim and of the generous symbolic gesture promoted by the Canton Argovie.

Banca del Gottardo is an Institutional Patron of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection

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